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To Andrew Hamilton Esqr — with the kindest regards & best wishes of his affect. Aunt. — L. Biggar

Edinr.
January 5th
1828

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Nov 26/67

A

VIEW

OF THE

NEW COVENANT.

ANDREW JACK PRINTER.

A

VIEW

OF THE

NEW COVENANT,

TAKEN EXPRESSLY FROM

THE SACRED RECORDS.

BY

JOSEPH GIBB,

MINISTER OF THE GOSPEL, BANFF.

"Incline your ear, and come unto me: hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you."—Isa. lv. 3.

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PREFACE.

THE author of the following Treatise had his attention seriously directed to the doctrine of the New Covenant above thirty years ago. After having deliberately examined the opinions of various godly and esteemed writers on the subject, he discovered, with much pain, that they were incapable of being fully reconciled, either with each other, or with the Sacred Record. The deep perplexity which this occasioned, taught him to recognise the holy Scriptures as his only standard of religious belief, and induced him to search them for himself, with all the care and impartiality that he could attain. After studying their account of the divine covenants with some perseverance, he obtained full satisfaction in his own mind, and occasionally took the liberty of laying his views before his christian brethren, particularly in lecturing over the Epistle to the Hebrews. But that he might not have any undue influence over their minds, on the ground of personal

confidence, he called them to prepare for hearing a future course of sermons on the new covenant, by reading all the books that they could procure on the subject, and comparing them with each other, and with the sure testimony of God. After having allowed them about two years for private reading and study in the manner recommended, he entered on the proposed sermons; and when they were nearly all delivered, a general desire was expressed by those who had heard them, that they should be published. With this desire, he has deemed it a duty to comply, in the hope that they may be useful to those into whose hands they shall fall, who feel their need of information on the subject, and honestly seek to know the truth as it is in Jesus Christ.

But, to prevent unnecessary disappointment, it may be proper to inform the reader, that, as the publication of the following Discourses was requested, merely on account of the important matter contained in them, and not for the sake of the stile in which it was communicated, no additional embellishment of any kind has been attempted, in preparing them for the press. As the author has made it his chief business, during the greater part of his life, to search for useful truth, wherever he could find it, and endeavour to impart the knowledge of it in the plainest words, rather than to seek after the entertainment of elegant composition, or acquire the art of amusing the imagination of others; he is quite

certain that any attempt to rise above his ordinary simplicity of language, would have been altogether unsuccessful. Readers of refined and fastidious taste, stand in no need of his labours, as there has lately been an abundant supply of religious books, far more congenial to their minds, than any thing that he could produce; nor does he indulge the hope, that any of them will be satisfied with a single paragraph of what he has written, except they consent to restrain their imagination, and make the truth welcome on account of its own intrinsic value, and its tendency to promote their eternal interest, though stated in the most homely manner.

In this sincere attempt to ascertain and exhibit the doctrine of the new covenant, as it is contained in the Bible alone; no appeal whatever has been made to the writings of any esteemed modern authors, either to obtain the support of their authority, or to meet popular prejudice by the apparent sanction of their names: and, that the least appearance of theological controversy might be avoided, the unguarded assertions of inaccurate writers have never been quoted for the purpose of being exposed and refuted. Nothing in any degree calculated to increase the mournful divisions of genuine christians, to provoke vain disputation among them, or inflame their bitter passions, has been introduced: and as the truth was not revealed merely to furnish men with new subjects of speculation,

but to call them back from their criminal wanderings, to a state of reconciliation with God, and teach them how to please him in all things; a variety of practical reflections and exhortations have been intermingled with the doctrines advanced. It is fondly hoped, that no sincere friend of Scripture truth will deem any apology necessary for the liberty used in what is here offered to the public, since nothing disrespectful is intended toward others, of any persuasion, who have advocated views somewhat different. Many of them bestowed much labour in searching into the deep things of God; their writings have been eminently useful, and their names will be justly honoured for generations to come: yet it must, after all, be admitted, that the best way of honouring their memory is by following their laudable example, in the persevering study of the Scriptures, rather than by yielding a rash and credulous assent to every thing that they asserted.

If any who are strongly attached to one or other of the different popular theories of the divine covenants, shall happen to look into this volume, it will be peculiarly needful for them to take heed to the frame of their minds in so doing, lest what was intended for their spiritual benefit should prove only a stumbling-block. Such persons naturally think it grievous, that others are not satisfied with those views of the new covenant which easily sa-

tisfied themselves, or that any more should be written on a subject which they consider sufficiently illustrated: they feel indignant when any of their favourite notions are called into question; and, presuming that they are perfectly acquainted with those sentiments which they wish to oppose, they refuse to allow them a fair hearing, and hastily misunderstand, misrepresent, and reject any representation of divine things to which they have been accustomed, as both erroneous and highly dangerous. The writer of the following *View of the New Covenant*, is prepared to make every reasonable allowance for the feelings of those who have zealously adopted opinions which, he humbly conceives, are not in exact accordance with the Sacred Oracles; and as he desires not to irritate them, but affectionately to recal their attention to what he firmly believes to be an important part of the counsel of God, he begs leave to request a full, patient, and candid hearing; and earnestly intreats, that none who may, in some degree, differ from him, will be so rash and unfair as to censure what he has advanced, without deliberately perusing every page of it—weighing all the passages of scripture to which he has referred—considering the practical tendency of the whole—and thereby preparing to make it at least apparent from what they say, that they were not more eager to condemn than careful to understand.

But this book was written purposely for the as-

sistance and encouragement of those *serious enquirers*, who feel the unspeakable importance of revealed truth, and fear the seduction of error—who see the difficulties that attend certain popular representations of the new covenant, and desire honestly to ascertain and embrace whatsoever is taught in the word of God, without being in any degree influenced by human opinion. Their peculiar anxiety, arising from uncertainty about doctrines of everlasting importance, is more painful and discouraging, that either the thoughtless, or the opinionative can conceive; but it may be wisely overruled by the Father of Lights for the advancement of their spiritual improvement and future usefulness. Their mind can scarcely be more perplexed or intimidated by strong and contradictory assertions on the subject, than that of the author was at a certain period. Having formerly suffered much himself from conscious uncertainty about various fundamental doctrines, he can now tenderly sympathize with those who feel involved in similar darkness; and as his doubts have been solved, and his fears removed, through the blessing of God on an exclusive attention to what he humbly considers the simple unsophisticated meaning of the Inspired Record, he esteems it his bounden duty to persuade such awakened and inquisitive persons to continue their researches with unwearied ardour, in the full confidence, that, if they be willing to hear the voice of

the good Shepherd, and follow him, he will render their way plain, and guide them to the sure knowledge of all things necessary to their present duty and everlasting happiness. Let them candidly accept what was specially intended for their spiritual benefit, and use it, along with much devout meditation and prayer, merely as a seasonable help in the study of the Scripture, without being in the least degree influenced by what is advanced, except in as far as it corresponds with that only sure rule of faith: And may the soul of every honest enquirer be enriched with abundance of divine truth, grace, and consolation!

Banff, June 21, 1827.

CONTENTS.

Page.

INTRODUCTORY DISCOURSE, ... 3

The subject recommended, ... 5
The general plan of treating it proposed, . . . 9
Rules for the profitable investigation of it, . . . 12
The attention of three classes particularly solicited, . 21

PART FIRST.

OF THE PROPER SIGNIFICATION OF A DIVINE COVENANT, 24

The natural signification of the original words rendered by *covenant* in both the sacred volumes, 25
The principal examples in Scripture by which the nature of a divine covenant is illustrated, ... 26
The propriety of adhering to the conclusion which naturally results from these examples, ... 39
Practical Reflections on the foregoing part of the subject, 42

PART SECOND.

OF THE INTIMATIONS WHICH THOSE WHO WERE UNDER THE OLD COVENANT, RECEIVED OF GOD'S DESIGN OF MAKING A NEW COVENANT IN THE DAYS OF THE MESSIAH. 46

PART THIRD.

Page.

OF THE PARTIES BETWEEN WHOM THE NEW COVENANT IS MADE, ... 57

The reasons why some have taken a different view of this subject, stated and obviated, ... 62
Practical Reflections, ... 68

PART FOURTH.

OF THE MATTER OF THE NEW COVENANT, . . . 71

ART. 1. "*For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness*," *&c.* ib.
The nature of the blessing exhibited in this article, . 72
The peculiar importance of it, ... 76
Practical Reflections, ... 86

ART. 2. "*For all shall know me*," *&c.* 91
What knowledge God has promised to communicate, . 92
In what manner it is imparted, ... 97
To what extent he has undertaken to bestow it, . . 101
Practical Reflections, ... 107

ART. 3. "*I will put my laws into their mind*," *&c.* . . 112
To what law this refers, ... 114
In what manner God puts his law into the heart, . 121
The beneficial consequences which result from the accomplishment of this promise, ... 126
Practical Remarks, ... 130

ART. 4. "*I will be to them a God*," 137
How much is included in having the Lord for a God, 138
What the Lord is to them who have an interest in him, 147
The peculiar happiness of those to whom the Lord is a God, ... 152
Practical Reflections, ... 160

ART. 5. "*They shall be to me a people*, ... 164
The peculiar manner in which the Israel of God became his people, ... 165

Page.
In what respects they become his people, ... 171
For what purposes they become his, or what they are to God as his people, ... 176
Practical Reflections, ... 182

PART FIFTH.

OF THE PLACE THAT JESUS CHRIST SUSTAINS IN THE NEW COVENANT, ... 187

SECT. 1. *Christ is the Mediator of the new covenant*, . . ib.
Why a Mediator between God and his Israel was necessary, ib.
Jesus Christ is a fit and suitable Mediator, ... 196
In what his office as a Mediator consists, ... 199
Practical Remarks, ... 205

SECT. 2. *Christ is the Messenger of the new covenant*, . . 211

SECT. 3. *Christ is the Surety of the new covenant*, . . 217

SECT. 4. *Christ is the Minister or Administrator of the new covenant*, ... 224
Practical Reflections, ... 233

SECT. 5. *Christ is the sum and substance of the new covenant*, 235
A general account of what is treasured up in him, . . 236
The particular blessings which the people of God find in him, and derive from him, ... 238
Practical Reflections 250

PART SIXTH.

OF THE PECULIAR EXCELLENCE OF THE NEW COVENANT, 256

A contrast stated between the new covenant and the old, . ib.
Practical Remarks, ... 274

PART VII.

Page.

OF THE WAY IN WHICH MEN OBTAIN A PERSONAL INTEREST IN THE NEW COVENANT, ... 276

It is by faith alone that a personal interest in it is obtained, 277
The nature of faith explained, ... 280
The reasons why the benefits of the new covenant are obtained by faith only, ... 291
Practical Reflections, ... 297

PART EIGHTH.

OF THE MOTIVES BY WHICH THOSE WHO HAVE HITHERTO CONTINUED STRANGERS TO THE NEW COVENANT SHOULD BE PERSUADED TO EMBRACE IT WITHOUT DELAY, . 300

The new covenant recommended to different classes of hearers, 302

PART NINTH.

DIRECTIONS FOR ENTERING INTO COVENANT WITH GOD, 326

Various difficulties stated and obviated, ... ib.

PART TENTH.

THE DUTY OF THOSE WHO HAVE OBTAINED AN INTEREST IN THE NEW COVENANT 352

The grounds on which holy obedience is required of the people of God, ... 353
The principal branches of christian obedience, ... 357
Concluding requests, ... 381

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A VIEW

OF THE

NEW COVENANT.

INTRODUCTORY DISCOURSE.

HEBREWS VIII. 6—13. *But now hath he obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much also he is the Mediator of a better covenant, &c.*

THOSE who have a tolerable acquaintance with religious books, must have observed, that our godly forefathers enlarged much on what they termed the Covenant of Works and the Covenant of Grace, and that they connected with either the former or the latter of these covenants, almost every important fact and doctrine, promise and precept, contained in the Scriptures. In modern times, a great departure from this practice has appeared. Notwithstanding the unprecedented multitude of religious publications, great and small, that have issued from the press within the last twenty or thirty years, very few have treated on the two covenants; and although cheap tracts, containing a plain summary of divine truth, have lately been multiplied beyond example, we have neither seen nor heard of one in which the subject is directly handled. During the same period, these covenants have, with few exceptions, been as much neglected or avoided by preachers as by writers.

Candid and judicious observers will readily acknowledge, that many of the old writers enlarged too much on the covenants. They certainly went to an extreme in allegorising the mystical figures, and overstraining the metaphors of the holy Scriptures; and as their peculiar manner of treating of the divine covenants, issued in great diversity and contradiction of sentiment among them, we need not wonder that their successors, in tracing the beautiful simplicity of divine truth, have generally and cautiously avoided a theme on which the most popular authors had written with discouraging perplexity, especially as they could not hope to make a *new* and *fair appeal to the inspired records*, without exposing themselves to the prejudice, and the severest censures of all who rigidly adhere to some human theory. All extremes however, ought to be avoided. If some have bewildered themselves by speculating about the new covenant beyond what its Author had revealed, it cannot thereby be rendered either lawful or safe to dread and shun it, as only a hopeless labyrinth of darkness and confusion. The importance of the subject is unquestionable; and as it has already proved difficult to men of far superior talents, it becomes us to enter on the investigation of it with godly fear, self-diffidence, and humble dependence on the Father of Lights, who frequently allows the wise and prudent to wander from the truth, and in much condescension reveals it to simple babes.

The new covenant is most clearly and fully exhibited in this apostolic epistle, which was addressed to those christians of the Hebrew nation who had formerly been under the old covenant. To establish their minds in the faith and profession of the Gospel, and encourage them to persevere in obedience to it, the inspired writer taught them the infinite superiority of the Lord Jesus Christ to the great prophet Moses, by whom God had spoken to their fathers—to all the angels who had been employed at the giving of the law, in the wilderness of Sinai,—and to Aaron, with all the priests of his order, who had been ap-

pointed to minister before JEHOVAH in his ancient sanctuary. He proved that the priesthood of Christ is superior to that of Aaron, because it continues for ever, after the order of Melchisedec, (chap. vii.) and because he is the minister of a better covenant, which is set forth in the words before us in a quotation from Jer. xxxi. 31—34.

My object in this introductory discourse shall be,

First, To *recommend* the study of the new covenant:

Secondly, To propose the *general plan* of what is intended concerning it: and,

Thirdly, To offer a few *rules* for the profitable investigation of it.

I. Permit me to recommend the new covenant to your serious consideration. This is the more necessary, because the subject has for some years past been so generally neglected, that many are mournfully ignorant of it, and too little disposed to exercise their minds about what they have hastily imagined to be inexplicable, unnecessary, and unprofitable.

1. I observe, that the new covenant demands your attention, because *the Scriptures are full of it.* All Scripture, being given by inspiration of God, is profitable, and worthy of serious regard; but those things have the chief claim to our attention, which are most clearly and fully revealed, and most urgently pressed on the mind of the reader by the Holy Ghost. By consulting any concordance it will be found, that the word *covenant* or *testament*, which is the same in the original, very frequently occurs in the Bible. Various divine covenants are mentioned as of special importance; but the passages do not require to be particularly specified at present, because we shall have occasion hereafter to consider their distinct meaning, relation to each other, and connexion with the new covenant: only it may be observed, that all these covenants are represented as weighty and

interesting: and that the new covenant is celebrated as the end of all the rest of them—as far superior to them all—as that in which christians have the principal concern; and therefore, it should be the chief subject of their contemplation. To overlook it, or be ignorant of it, must be inconsistent with the christian character, injurious to the soul, and offensive to that God who looks on men with complacency, in proportion as they tremble at his word.

2. The new covenant claims your attention, because *the knowledge of it is highly conducive to the right understanding of the Scriptures.* It is impossible to comprehend the subordinate parts of the sacred writings, without some acquaintance with their general scope and design. Those who detach particular passages from their connexion, and draw important conclusions from them, or impose arbitrary glosses upon them, almost always mistake their true meaning, and fall into error. They unfold a succession of divine covenants, generally connected with each other, and subordinate to the new covenant, in the developement of which they happily issued; therefore correct apprehensions of its peculiar nature and excellence, prepare the mind for justly estimating the diversified facts, declarations, institutions, and predictions by which it was introduced. As it is by keeping in view the particular design of some complex machine, that we are enabled more advantageously to trace the operation and utility of its minute parts, which all conspire to the same end; so by the knowledge of the new covenant, which is the most complete manifestation of the glory of God, we shall be assisted in forming a right conception of his more obscure communications of heavenly truth, which were granted to the patriarchs and prophets; we shall see that, in all ages, the only way of acceptance before the Most High, has been by faith in the Messiah, and that "whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning."

3. The new covenant claims your attention, because *it is the great comprehensive ground of true spiritual comfort.* It includes all the precious blessings of the

Gospel, and freely exhibits them to the guilty who are ready to perish. It secures the complete salvation of all who take hold of it as their charter and inheritance. It shows what God will be to his people, and do for them, through Jesus Christ, both during this life, and that eternal state which is to come; and when its promises are sealed home on the hearts of believers by the influence of the Holy Spirit, they are enabled to rise above the sorrows of their pilgrimage, to anticipate the future felicity which their heavenly Father has prepared for them, and to rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory. Those who desire to possess the present comfort of genuine religion, cannot adopt any more effectual means, than the careful study and application of that covenant which comprehends the strongest consolation for all that have fled to Christ as their refuge and hope.

4. The new covenant claims your attention, because *it discovers the principal grounds and the extent of your obligations toward God.* It shews how God loved us when we were his enemies, redeemed us from everlasting destruction by the precious blood of his only begotten Son, called us from spiritual darkness into his marvellous light, made us partakers of a divine nature, and admitted us into a near relation to himself, as his dear children. By discovering the greatness and constancy of God's love toward us, we see how ardently and stedfastly we ought to love him. The precious price with which he redeemed us from sin, shews how cheerfully we ought to deny ourselves, and crucify our lusts for his sake. The new and holy nature which he imparts, teaches those who receive it, that they ought to be holy as he is holy. The benefits which he freely bestows on his people, and the endearing relation to himself to which he advances them, shew that they ought to give themselves wholly to him, and to serve him with all their might, according to the privileges of their new state.

While men have low, contracted views of God's kindness towards them, their hearts are closed by unbelief and self-love; they aim at nothing great and

generous, but, like the old self-righteous Jews, make his commands void, by contracting the rule of duty to an empty outward form. They extenuate the guilt which they ought to confess, vindicate their carnal lusts which they ought to mortify, and trust in those hypocritical services for which they ought rather to blush. Those who understand the new covenant, see that God has the strongest possible claims to all that they are, and all that they can do to please him. They feel that nothing less than the obedience of their whole heart, will accord with the design of their redemption, and that they never can make any adequate return for all his benefits. To such persons, the least sin, even in thought only, appears great, and all that they do for God appears little, compared with what he has done, and promised to do for them. Others may wonder at their exalted aims, and consider them beside themselves, but they well understand that they have the highest possible reasons for living to the divine glory.

5. The new covenant requires attention, because *it effectually animates the christian for the practice of his duty.* The clearest detail of particular duties that can be given, is not sufficient to render men obedient. By nature they are dead in sin, equally destitute of ability and inclination to serve their Creator. Many hear his commands expounded, commend what they hear, forget what they commend, and continue what they were before, both in their temper and conduct. The application of the purest precepts to such persons can never induce them to become obedient. They need to be effectually persuaded, encouraged, and animated. Until they obtain pardoning mercy and renewing grace from God, they cannot be his willing subjects. His commands are not grievous, but he requires the heart, nor will he accept the reluctant performances of the slavish mind. Now, as the new covenant shews the large extent of that holy obedience which God demands, it furnishes the most persuasive, and the only effectual principles of action. The spiritual application of its promises sub-

dues the natural enmity of the rebellious, softens their obdurate heart, reconciles them to God, makes them willing to be and to do whatever he requires, encourages them with seasonable supplies of grace to renew and strengthen them, and stimulates them to abound in every good work, by the cheering hope of ultimate perfection and eternal glory. In proportion as the christian comprehends the new covenant, his spiritual joy is increased; the more that he enjoys of God, so much the more he loves and desires to serve him.

II. I shall now propose the *general plan* according to which our enquiries respecting the new covenant may be most advantageously pursued.

1. We may attempt to ascertain *the proper signification of a divine covenant.* The propriety of this is evident, for except we understand the meaning of such covenants in general, it would be vain to attempt the explanation of the new covenant. Observe, it is the nature of a *divine* covenant that is in question; for as the new covenant is divine, its meaning must be fixed agreeably to the nature of all the other covenants which are ascribed to God; for to reason on this subject from covenants so called made by men, would tend only to darken it. In this enquiry it will be of the utmost importance to adhere faithfully and rigidly to the words of Scripture, to the entire exclusion of all human conjecture or theory.

2. We may consider the various *intimations* which those who were under the old covenant received *of God's design of making a new covenant* in the days of the Messiah. This part of our subject will shew the gradual way in which the Lord trained his ancient people to look for a new and better covenant, as the consummation of the covenant which they had received, and prove that they had no solid reason for considering the old covenant unalterable and everlasting, or being stumbled at the introduction of another. The unbelieving Jews did not understand these early intimations of a new covenant,

and hence they rejected it, and Jesus Christ by whom it was published. As we have superior advantages for comprehending their meaning and design, the contemplation of them will prepare us for perceiving the connexion between it and those previous covenants by which it was gradually introduced.

3. The *parties* between whom the new covenant is made, will next demand our attention. Every covenant naturally supposes that more than one person or party is concerned. All the covenants which are ascribed to God in Scripture, are represented as made between himself and some other party. This is generally admitted, but very different and opposite sentiments have been advanced, respecting the precise party with whom God has established his new covenant. As the true knowledge of this point is indispensable to the right understanding of all that is to follow respecting the parts and qualities of it, we must make a full appeal to the various forms of expression by which God has revealed his mind concerning it.

4. We may then take a particular view of *the matter* of the new covenant, or the several *distinct articles of which it consists.* The precise nature and number of the articles, must be ascertained from the express words of it, as is done in all similar cases, to the total exclusion of such additions as might be suggested by the presumptuous wisdom of man. To discover the full import of these articles, we must appeal to the united light of the various parallel passages by which they are respectively illustrated. This will be to receive the explanation of God's covenant from God himself.

5. The *peculiar place which Jesus Christ sustains* in the new covenant, will next come before us. His place must be conspicuous and honourable, corresponding with his essential dignity, as the only Son of God, his complex nature as Immanuel, the determination of the Father to glorify him, and the saving relations by which he stands connected with all the heirs of promise. If we carefully trace

the account of his complex office which is given in the Scriptures, we shall be convinced that it is every way excellent, suitable, and worthy of our confidence: if we ascribe any thing more or less to him than they have explicitly done, we shall thereby disparage his true character, darken the truth, and hurt our own spiritual interest.

6. We may then contemplate the *peculiar excellence* of the new covenant. The great Apostle of the Gentiles esteemed it his highest honour that he had been made an able and successful minister of the new covenant which was the consummation and end of the former one. He magnified his office, by repeatedly contrasting it with the old covenant in variety of instances. By collecting and fairly weighing these examples of contrast between them, we shall be enabled to ascertain the principal qualities of each, the distinction between them, the unspeakable superiority of the new covenant, and the manifold advantages of those who are under it.

7. The *precise way in which men obtain a personal interest* in the new covenant, will next engage our attention. On this part of the subject, we shall have occasion to consider the free access that helpless sinners have to all the blessings of it by the Gospel, the *nature of that faith* by which they embrace these blessings, and the reasons of its saving efficacy to the exclusion of the works of the law, together with the gracious fruits by which it distinguishes and characterises them who are partakers of it.

8. An attempt shall next be made to *persuade those who have continued strangers to this covenant, to embrace it*, so as thereby to enjoy its invaluable benefits without delay. Here such motives and reasons shall be advanced, as are calculated to convince, awaken, and humble careless sinners, and encourage them to join themselves to the Lord in a perpetual covenant, as the most effectual means of securing their best and eternal interest.

9. Serious enquirers may then be furnished with more *particular directions for entering into covenant*

with God. When men are brought to a state of deep conviction, and contrition for their sins, they often appear foolish and slow of heart to believe unto salvation. Various stumbling-blocks beset their path, which require to be removed. Their heart seems to become worse: doubts and scruples arise in their mind, and they complain that they have no ability to come to Christ by faith. Such persons feel their need of the plainest directions. General instructions and exhortations to believe, do not satisfy them. The grounds of their perplexity must be removed, their overwhelming fears must be quieted, and the way to immediate peace clearly set before them.

10. We may, last of all, consider *how those who have obtained an interest in the new covenant, ought to walk so as to please God,* and fulfil the duties of their new relation to him. This concluding and most practical part of our subject, will bring before us the most important comprehensive precepts of the law of Christ, the peculiar principles of gospel obedience, and the appointed means of spiritual growth and comfort in the ways of the Lord.

In going over these topics, some things may possibly be advanced, that all are not prepared to receive; and probably some things will be omitted which certain persons have been accustomed to consider both true and necessary. Error can profit no person. Truth is invaluable, especially on a subject of such vital importance. We have all an interest in being undeceived, and brought to the knowledge of God's covenant as he has revealed it. Our minds need to be prepared for entering on the enquiry before us, with candour, and receiving divine truth in its simplicity, with the meekness of a little child.

III. Permit me, therefore, as was proposed, to submit to your earnest attention, the following *directions for the profitable study of the new covenant.*

1. *Fully divest your mind of all prejudice, either against or for any sentiment, on the ground of its being either old or new.* Inordinate attachment to the

suffrage of antiquity, chains down the mind in ignorance and error: fondness for mere novelty, renders it liable to be "tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive." Both ancients and moderns have differed among themselves; and all men are liable to err, when guided by their own wisdom. You have much more interest in discovering *what is the truth of God*, than in following the leaders of any sect. Therefore, keep your mind free from every bias, search for truth as your main object; nor fear to embrace it wherever you find it; and follow wherever it shall lead you. Be willing to bring all your old opinions to the test of Scripture without reluctance, and believe nothing, whether old or new, except on the ground of competent evidence.

2. *Diligently consult the writings of godly men for your assistance in ascertaining the meaning of Scripture; but honour the testimony of the Holy Ghost as the only ground of faith.* Do not implicitly believe all that men of eminent piety and talents have advanced, neither despise and neglect their writings because they are not infallible. Both these extremes must be avoided as criminal and dangerous. It is the appointment of God, that those who have discovered the light of truth, shall exhibit it for the benefit of others; therefore, all who refuse to avail themselves of the labours of those who have gone before them, under the pretence of keeping exclusively to the Scriptures, manifest the pride of self-conceit, and hinder their spiritual improvement, by neglecting the proper means of instruction. The Scripture is an inexhaustible mine of knowledge; but mutual assistance is necessary in working it so as to obtain the precious treasure; and it seldom happens that those derive much benefit from it, who pertinaciously reject those truths which are laid before them by others, and value only the fruit of their own researches. Duly respect the sentiments of wise and good men, deliberately consult their best writings; but instead of assenting to any

thing on the ground of their assertion, keep in view the important question of our Apostle, "NEVERTHELESS, *what saith the Scripture?*" Learn to esteem those books most highly, in which the words of Scripture are most judiciously introduced, and which are best calculated to assist you in understanding them, and judging of their proper import for yourself. Reject those writings which consist of the "great swelling words" of vain declamation, which tickle the imagination without informing the judgment, and tend more to exalt the author than to honour the sacred record or instruct the reader. Reject also those works in which the *obvious* sense of Scripture is evaded and perverted by artful sophistry. Humility, sincerity, and reverence for divine truth in a writer, tend to produce the best effects in the reader; but the effusions of vanity and deceit tend to corrupt the heart. Never suppose that you can dishonour any good man by differing from him on proper grounds, or carrying your researches to greater extent. Columbus alone had the honour of discovering America, yet he left many things in that continent to be brought to light by the industry of his successors. Our venerable reformers called the attention of their contemporaries from uncertain traditions to the sure testimony of God, and the way of justification by faith; and we shall best shew our regard for their memory, by searching out those parts of truth which they did not fully attain. Highly respect the writings, therefore, which they left for your instruction; but judge of truth by the holy record alone; make it your exclusive standard, and never appeal to an inferior author as of any authority. Those who attempt to support their own opinions, and oppose those of their adversaries, by referring to the authority of famous authors, become guilty of calling man their father, and thereby deceive themselves, dishonour the Scriptures, impose on the simple, and excite the disgust of the more intelligent.

3. *Collect the principal passages of Scripture which treat of the same subject, and use them for the expla-*

nation of each other, instead of imposing an arbitrary meaning on any of them. It is a common opinion, that all sects of christians take their religious sentiments and rites from the Scriptures; but nothing can be more false or groundless, nor can there be any more certain token of deplorable ignorance, than to admit, that the sense of Scripture is ambiguous or self-contradictory. Multitudes quote detached texts in defence of their received creed, but few *take their creed from the Scriptures,* by consulting them with an unbiassed mind, for the purpose of ascertaining what they ought to believe. In order to understand the sacred writings, it is necessary to do them justice. There is scarcely any topic on which the whole truth is stated in one place; therefore all the separate passages that treat of any subject in question, must be brought together to illustrate each other. There are many texts which cannot be understood when separated from their proper connexion, and taken by themselves. To impose an arbitrary sense on such texts, is not to interpret, but to pervert them: yet it is in this way that many argue with great warmth in behalf of their peculiar opinions. They impose upon themselves by the mere sound of a few favourite texts of obscure meaning, and vainly conclude that their sentiments have the divine sanction. Instead of explaining obscure passages by the obvious meaning of those that speak explicitly on the same subject, they first attach their own private meaning to the former, and then set them in opposition to the latter. To do justice to the Scriptures and to ourselves, we must not bring our preconceived opinions along with us, and make it our chief care to select passages for their plausible support; but rather come to them with the honesty and docility of little children, to examine and receive the united amount of what they teach on every part of revealed truth. Instead of inquiring if any thing can be found in them that will countenance our particular sentiments, we should honestly inquire what they were evidently *intended to teach,* independently of every human opinion. In short, we

must impose no sense on any text which would be at variance with any other text, nor assign a meaning to any passage without being prepared to give a proper reason for so doing, from other passages that treat of the same subject.

4. *Neither add to the number of covenants that are ascribed to God in Scripture, nor overlook any of them as trivial or improper.* All the divine covenants are calculated to illustrate each other; and the nature of the new covenant may be best understood by comparing it with those that were made in ancient times. To obtain the full benefit of this source of illustration, it is necessary to submit in the most implicit manner to the language of inspiration. It would be dangerous in the extreme to ascribe any thing to God as a covenant, which is not expressly termed a covenant in his word, or to reject any transaction of his from being a proper covenant, to which that name is evidently given, or to introduce any thing as essential to a divine covenant which is not found in *every particular covenant* ascribed to God by the Holy Ghost. We must not presumptuously impose the name of a covenant on any communication of the divine will, which is not so designated in Scripture, from its supposed similarity to what is actually termed a covenant. To do so would violate truth, and introduce endless confusion and uncertainty. Other institutions nearly resembling a covenant, but not so named in Scripture, must be treated agreeably to what is evidently revealed about them; but there can be no danger of error or loss in a rigid adherence to the scriptural use of the word covenant, because what is so termed must have all the requisite qualities of the thing in question.

5. *Judge of the new covenant by the united light of all those passages which directly treat of it, in preference to those passages which contain only a distant uncertain allusion to it.* This rule cannot but approve itself to every candid mind; yet few rules have been more frequently violated. Many have largely expatiated about the new covenant, on the ground of passages

where the term does not occur at all, while they have strangely overlooked the *very words of the covenant itself*, as if it had never been directly recorded. We need not wonder that the most unscriptural and self-contradictory sentiments concerning it, have been introduced by this most preposterous method of interpretation. In proportion as men are strongly attached to mistaken views of any subject, in consequence of the misapplication of Scripture, they will generally be found very unwilling to hear those passages which do treat of it, brought forward according to their natural meaning. It may be fairly concluded, that those who are very opinionative on any religious topic, while they evidently shrink from those passages which most directly and explicitly treat of it, labour under the influence of prejudice and error. Nothing can be more conducive to the discovery of truth, than special attention to the united amount of the principal texts in which the subjects in question is most clearly stated. It is a favourable circumstance, that the passages which directly treat of the new covenant are both numerous and plain.

6. *Compare those heavenly things which concern the new covenant, with their instituted figures and patterns in the Old Testament, for the purpose of illustration; but never confound the heavenly things with the earthly types of them.* Moses, David, and Solomon, were all eminent figures of Christ, and the several covenants which God made with Abraham, with his posterity at Sinai, and with David their king, had all an ultimate reference to the new covenant, and were intended to introduce it: yet these covenants were all distinct from the new covenant, and from each other, as shall afterwards be explained. To confound any of them with the new covenant, must therefore be calculated only to darken both, and mislead the enquirer. It is equally improper to identify king David with his Son and Lord, and to misrepresent the promise which was made to him as a covenant between God and the Messiah. By such a lax method of interpreting the Scriptures,

their determinate meaning is completely nullified, and they are degraded, as capable of bearing any sense that the wildest imagination can impose. God made a covenant with the literal David, as the father of the Messiah according to the flesh, the principal part of which was a promise that the Messiah would be raised up in his family, at a future period, to reign on his throne for ever. This promise must not therefore, on any account, be turned into a covenant made with the Messiah himself, nor represented as the same with the new covenant. The literal sense of the Old Testament must always be first ascertained, and carefully distinguished from every allegorical and mystical interpretation.

7. *Make it your care to attain an extensive knowledge of divine truth, according to the order in which it is exhibited in the Scriptures, rather than too hastily to form any comprehensive system of your own.* The infinite mind of God knows all things individually and particularly, in a distinct and immediate manner. The human mind cannot comprehend a great number of different objects at once, without confusion. We are therefore under a necessity of arranging the various objects of our knowledge into classes, according to their natures, and we next attempt to reduce every separate particular under some general class. In this manner systems of opinion are gradually formed on various subjects. As this natural inclination to generalise and classify objects, results from narrowness of intellectual capacity, it is a common source of misapprehension and sophistry. It retarded the progress of useful knowledge, and bewildered mankind in a labyrinth of delusion, for many ages. All visible objects were supposed to consist of a small number of elementary principles; and by a theory rashly formed on the ground of a most imperfect analysis, men calling themselves philosophers, vainly attempted to account for the various appearances of nature. In modern times this method has been reversed. A direct appeal has been made to the voice of nature, by means of well-conducted experiments. Those have

been the most successful philosophers, who have been least tenacious of system, and most accurate in observing facts. Instead of subjecting nature to any fanciful theory, they have made her operations their study and their standard. The knowledge of theology ought to be pursued in the same unfettered judicious manner. Instead of setting out with any human system in our eye, and artfully interpreting the sacred volume in conformity with it, our duty will be to refrain from hastily forming any general theory, to attend minutely to the express words of Scripture, to yield a ready assent to their obvious meaning, without attempting to accommodate them to our previous conceptions, and accurately observe the order in which the several parts of divine truth are arranged, as undoubtedly the most natural and useful. No subject more imperiously demands a strict attention to the order and obvious meaning of Scripture, in preference to human theory, than the new covenant.

8. *Daily apply to God for the teaching of his Holy Spirit, with unfeigned self-diffidence and the prayer of faith.* We are furnished, on every hand, with the most humbling proofs of the insufficiency of human wisdom. As the Gentile sages did not discover the true God by their elaborate researches, it must be admitted that the natural understanding is incapable of comprehending his word without a divine influence. Those who lack wisdom are directed to ask it of God, with confidence that he will grant their request, James i. 5—7. We are furnished with the best examples of prayer for spiritual illumination, in Eph. i. 16—18. iii. 14—19. Fervent prayer serves the double purpose of procuring divine teaching, and promoting a serious, upright frame of mind, peculiarly favourable for the investigation of truth. "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him: and he will shew them his covenant." Ps. xxv. 14. Having such encouragement to ask the teaching of the Spirit, let us fervently implore the God of truth to grant us a wise and understanding heart, devoutly realise his invisible presence,

and judge of the evidence that may come before us, under the influence of a firm persuasion, that his eyes are upon our hearts to mark our sincerity.

9. *After deliberately ascertaining the proper import of those passages of Scripture which treat of the new covenant, hold it fast in your mind, without being shaken by the frivolous objections of captious opposers.* God has revealed his will to mankind in a manner calculated to try their sincerity. The most complete assurance of the truth, may be attained by honest inquirers; but no part of it is stated with such mathematical and unvaried precision of language, as to preclude the possibility of raising plausible difficulties and objections. Those who seek occasion to contradict, will always find it. The fundamental doctrines of the Gospel have all, at one time or another, been darkened and perplexed by perverse reasonings; and those who have not resolution to hold fast what they have seen confirmed with competent evidence, must always remain unstable like the waves of the sea. We ought fairly to attend to such objections as appear to have any probable foundation in the word of God; but those captious objections which are grounded on human theory and misapprehension, ought to be rejected at once. Our care should be to understand and believe what he has evidently revealed, and not to exercise our ingenuity in trying how much we could advance against it, or encourage the vain jangling of those, who make it their chief employment to undermine and subvert the truth. This caution is peculiarly necessary in attending to the subject before us, because it has been set in variety of different lights; and those who have adopted any mistaken theory, commonly oppose the simple declarations of Scripture, with every objection that they can think of, before they yield to its overpowering force.

10. *Make an immediate practical use of the truth that you discover, and take heed of resting in barren speculation.* The word of the Lord demands cordial and universal subjection; and none can pray for the

knowledge of his will with sincerity or acceptance, except those who are disposed to submit to it and follow it without reserve. Knowledge without obedience, renders its possessor only so much more guilty. Those who hear the truth with dislike or indifference, do thereby harden their own hearts, resist the Holy Ghost, and provoke him to leave them a prey to delusion; but those who receive it with affection, hide it in an honest heart, and comply with its requirements, thereby honour its Divine Author, and put themselves in the way of farther discoveries. Jesus said, "If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God." Instead of treating the new covenant as a subject of disputation, it will be our duty to study it as the ground of our hope for eternity, to embrace it as our inheritance, to rejoice in its sufficiency, and shew our gratitude to its Author, by keeping his commandments. By acting in this manner, under the sanctifying influence of the truth, our minds will be gradually established, our spiritual knowledge will be rapidly advanced, and we shall become prepared, in due time, for entering that world of perfect knowledge where all the redeemed shall walk in the divine light, and know even as they are known.

I conclude this introductory discourse, by respectfully soliciting the special attention of the three following classes to the subject before us.

1. *Those to whom the new covenant is an almost unknown subject.* If you have hitherto read and heard little concerning it, you must be ignorant of a large and important part of sacred truth; nor is it possible for you to understand the loss which you sustain, or the danger which you incur, by such ignorance, till it be removed. It is too natural for the ignorant to turn away their thoughts from what they suppose cannot be either very necessary or interesting, especially when they conceive that the knowledge which is recommended, cannot be attained without a considerable degree of mental exertion. Take heed of yielding to such criminal

indolence. The new covenant is proclaimed to you from heaven as the ground of faith, it deserves and demands all the attention of which you are capable, and it will abundantly reward all your researches. Having never embraced any false theory of it, you have little that requires to be unlearned, and you may fairly appeal to the infallible standard, without reluctance. Take the directions that have been suggested under serious consideration; resolutely comply with them without delay; and thus you may expect to succeed in the discovery of what will be of lasting benefit to your soul.

2. *Those whose mind is already settled in the belief of some particular theory of the covenants.* You have read various respectable authors on this subject, and either adopted one of their systems as a whole, or modified it by your own reflections. Having bestowed much care in your inquiries, and obtained what you consider a satisfactory result, it must be painful to hear any thing that is not in unison with your received principles; and it will require much resolution on your part, to submit them to be tried afresh by the test of Scripture, or to weigh what may be laid before you, with patience and candour. You must admit, however, if your reading on the covenants has been extensive, that much-esteemed writers have differed very widely in their views of them, and that their contradictory sentiments cannot be all scriptural. Some of them must have been mistaken: and what if those should be found incorrect whose sentiments you have adopted? It will avail nothing to boast of their superior learning and piety, or to urge the undoubting confidence that they had in all that they taught, and the plausible way in which they reasoned. None of them pretended to be absolutely infallible; therefore it would be unwise to decline farther inquiry, as if you judged yourself infallible. You have the advantage of knowing the importance of the subject, and you are now called to renew the study of it. Shew your sincerity, therefore, by divesting yourself of prejudice, and coming with meekness and docility to the

Sacred Oracles which are able to make you wise unto salvation, and which will not mislead those who truly appeal to them. If your received sentiments be found correct, your faith will be confirmed by repeated investigation: if in any thing you have hitherto been mistaken, you have the greatest interest in being undeceived.

3. *Those who have been brought into a state of discouraging perplexity, by the variety of contradictory accounts of the covenants, that are given in religious books.* You have examined the sentiments of sundry authors, and observed with regret, in how many instances they have differed. After deliberately and candidly weighing the evidences produced on every side, you have felt too much reason for being dissatisfied. The numerous difficulties and contradictions which have presented themselves, have often agitated your mind, and excited the desire of farther information. You have remarked with astonishment, that those portions of Scripture which treat most directly of the new covenant, have been most unaccountably overlooked, and that attempts have been made to support particular theories, by specious reasonings from passages that seem in a great measure foreign to it. Be thankful that God has turned your attention to a subject so important, and implanted in your heart the prevailing love of truth. Your mind is happily prepared to understand and value what may be advanced, to judge fairly of the evidence that may be presented, and welcome every honest attempt to promote your spiritual improvement; therefore you may hope for ultimate success. Continue to respect those who have written on the covenants with apparent sincerity, but look beyond them all to the unerring standard, and guard against every bias to the right hand or the left. Search once more for the truth as for hidden treasure, according to the directions that have been proposed; cheerfully submit to the declarations of the Holy Ghost; and may the Lord give you understanding in all things.—*Amen.*

PART FIRST.

OF THE PROPER SIGNIFICATION OF A DIVINE COVENANT.

HEBREWS VIII. 10. *This is the covenant that I will make, &c.*

THE Almighty Sovereign of the universe, says, "The heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool: but to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and that trembleth at my word." Agreeably to this declaration, the first preachers of the Gospel renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully, but by manifestation of the truth commending themselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God. The sacred word requires to be studied with profound reverence, and expounded with fairness, in opposition to deceit: to be brought home to the conscience of the hearer with plainness and affection, and received with attention, meekness, and the obedience of faith. We have need to keep these sentiments in view, while employed in investigating, unfolding, and applying the doctrine of the new covenant: "for scorners seek wisdom, and find it not; but the secret of the Lord is with them that fear him, and the meek he will teach his way."

The first thing proposed in the general arrangement, was to ascertain the proper signification of a divine covenant, as a necessary step toward the right understanding of the new covenant.

In entering on this part of the subject, it would be easy to affirm at once, that a divine covenant is of the same import with a bargain, treaty, or mutual agreement between two or more parties. The various circumstances of a human bargain, might then be enumerated, such as conditions, promises, penalties,

bonds, subscriptions, seals, sureties, and witnesses. After framing a spiritual theory of these in the imagination, recourse might next be had to the Scriptures in support of it, and variety of figurative expressions and remote allusions might easily be *accommodated to the system*, so as to give it a very plausible and imposing appearance. But would this process of *first framing a theory*, and *afterward calling in the aid of Scripture for its support*, correspond with our obligations to come first to the Scripture as the fountain of truth, to tremble at the word of the Lord, to search it as for hidden treasures, and receive, with the docility of little children, whatever it is found to contain? Could a plan so arbitrary and fanciful, satisfy the judicious inquirer, or commend itself to the conscience? Would not such artifice too much resemble the hidden things of darkness, and deceit, which the Apostles renounced? That our views of a divine covenant may be accurate, they must be *originally and exclusively taken from the* Sacred Record, without any effort of imagination, or any violence in bending its words from their natural and obvious meaning.

Let us therefore consider,

First, The natural signification of the words of both the inspired volumes, which are rendered in our version by covenant or testament.

Second, The principal examples in Scripture, by which the meaning of the word covenant is illustrated, particularly when applied to the Divine Being.

Third, The propriety of adhering to the conclusion which naturally results from these examples.

I. Let us consider the natural signification of the words which in our version are rendered by covenant.

1. The word which denotes covenant in the Old Testament, is *berith* (בריתּ) Some critics think this word is derived from (ברר) which signifies *to make clean* or *purify*; or from (בריא) to *cut down*, because covenants were anciently confirmed or ratified

by the slaughter of clean animals; hence, to make or cut a covenant, was to confirm a covenant by cutting some victim in twain. Of this practice we have examples in Gen. xv. 9—19. Jer. xxxiv. 18, 19. Others suppose that the word is taken from (ברה) *to choose*, because the divine covenants were made with those whom God had freely selected for that purpose. Ps. lxxxix. 3. Neither of these conjectures throws any light on the precise nature of a covenant. Others derive the word rendered covenant, from (ברא) *to form*, or *create*, and agree that it denotes an *appointment*, *disposition*, *constitution*, *settlement*, or *establishment*. By combining these terms in our mind, we may form the radical idea of a divine covenant.

2. The word denoting covenant in the New Testament is *diatheke* (διαθηκη). By this word the Greek interpreters rendered the Hebrew term בריתי in their version of the Old Testament. It frequently occurs in the New Testament, and in our version is rendered sometimes by covenant, and in other cases by testament, as in Heb. vii. 22; viii. 6, 8, 9, 10; ix. 15, 16, 17, 20; x. 16, 29. 1 Cor. xi. 25. and in many other places. It is taken from διατιθημι, which signifies *to place*, *dispose*, or *appoint*; and its meaning corresponds with that of the Hebrew word as above explained. The most accurate critics are agreed that διαθηκη does not denote a testament, nor mutual agreement, nor bargain, but simply a *disposition*, *settlement*, *institution*, and *constitution* of things. The Greek word which properly denotes a treaty or agreement, is different, being συνθηκη, which never occurs in the New Testament. As the term διαθηκη is of general signification, it does not convey the idea of a mutual agreement or bargain; therefore this arbitrary interpretation must not be imposed: but the precise sense in which it is used by the sacred writers, may be ascertained with the greatest certainty, by attending to those divine institutions to which they applied it.

II. Let us therefore proceed to consider the prin-

cipal *examples* by which the proper signification of a divine covenant is illustrated.

1. God established a covenant with *Noah*. This is recorded in Gen. ix. 8—17.; viii. 21, 22. The following words contain the substance of it: "God spake to Noah, and to his sons with him, saying, Behold I establish my covenant with you, and with your seed after you; and with every living creature that is with you, of the fowl, of the cattle, and of every beast of the earth with you, from all that go out of the ark to every beast of the earth. And I will establish my covenant with you; neither shall all flesh be cut off any more by the waters of a flood, neither shall there any more be a flood to destroy the earth. I do set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be a token of a covenant between me and the earth."

In these words we have an account of the *parties* between whom the covenant was made; namely, God, who was the author of it, and Noah together with his posterity, and all the animals of every kind that had been preserved in the ark. It is evident from the nature of these creatures, that this covenant was not any mutual agreement or bargain; for how could a bargain have been made with the fowls and beasts of the earth? It had nothing of the form of a bargain; being neither more nor less than the special appointment or settlement of the Almighty Creator. The *precise matter* of which this covenant consisted, is plainly stated; being a divine promise of the regular succession of seasons to all generations, to the exclusion of any return of the waters to destroy the earth. The rainbow, though produced in a natural way, was appointed to be *the token* of the perpetual stability of this settlement. It does not appear that the covenant made with Noah, had any direct reference to spiritual blessings, or the salvation of sinners by the Messiah; yet the unalterable stability of it is referred to as a pledge of the steadfastness of the everlasting covenant of peace, Isaiah liv. 9, 10.

2. God established a peculiar covenant with *Abraham*. The amount of it may be collected from

the following words: "Now the Lord had said to Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee; and I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing. And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed. And Abram said, Lord God, what wilt thou give me, seeing I go childless, and the steward of my house is this Eliezer of Damascus? And the Lord said, This shall not be thine heir, but he that shall come forth out of thine own bowels shall be thine heir. And he brought him forth abroad, and said, Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them: and he said unto him, So shall thy seed be. And he believed in the Lord; and he counted it to him for righteousness. In the same day the Lord made a covenant with Abram, saying, Unto thy seed have I given this land, from the river of Egypt, unto the great river, the river Euphrates. Behold my cove- is with thee, and thou shalt be a father of many nations. Neither shall thy name any more be called Abram; but thy name shall be Abraham; for a father of many nations have I made thee. And I will establish my covenant between me and thee, and thy seed after thee, in their generations, for an everlasting covenant: to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee. This is my covenant, which ye shall keep between me and you, and thy seed after thee; every man-child among you shall be circumcised. By myself have I sworn, saith the Lord, That in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea-shore; and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed. Gen. xii. 1—3.; xv. 2—7, 18.; xvii. 2—10. xxii. 16—18.

The parties concerned in this covenant, were, God, the sole maker of it, and Abraham with his seed in their generations. It had no appearance of

a treaty or bargain. Abraham was not consulted about the terms of it, neither was any valuable consideration required on his part. Like the covenant made with Noah, it was a divine institution or settlement, consisting of free promises; and the patriarch obtained an interest in them, not by any personal righteousness, but only by believing. The rite of circumcision, was not required as a meritorious condition, but was appointed merely as the sign or token of the covenant. These things are evident from Heb. xi. 8. Gen. xv. 6. Rom. iv. 9—16. In this covenant with Abrahams' God promised to bless him, give him a son, multiply his posterity, be a God to them, deliver them from their oppressors, give them the land of Canaan as their inheritance, make them a great victorious nation, and that in his seed all the nations should be blessed.

The promises of this covenant had a partial and subordinate accomplishment in the birth of Isaac, the rapid increase of his posterity in Egypt, their subsequent deliverance from bondage, and happy settlement in the land of Canaan. This accomplishment of the divine promise to Abraham, is largely detailed in the history of his offspring, and particularly recognised in Exod. vi. 2—8. Joshua xxi. 43—45. Ps. cv. 8—44.

It ought never to be forgotten, however, that this covenant had a principal reference to the coming of the Messiah, as a descendant of Abraham according to the flesh, to bless all nations with a spiritual, complete, and eternal salvation. This most important and joyful consummation of it, is recognised by the clearest testimonies. "Ye are the children of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying unto Abraham, And in thy seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed. Unto you first, God having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities. And the Scripture foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the Gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed. Christ hath

redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: that the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith." See at large Luke i. 68—79. Acts iii. 25, 26. Gal. iii. 8—14.

3. God made a covenant with the *Israelites as a nation* at mount Sinai. This covenant is recorded in Exod. xx. 1—17. It *consisted of ten words or commandments*, which JEHOVAH proclaimed to them in the most awful, impressive manner, and afterward wrote on two tables of stone. These tables were deposited by Moses in the ark, which, for that reason, was called the ark of the covenant. As the Israelites could not endure the voice of JEHOVAH, he revealed the rest of his will to them by the ministry of Moses, and gave them a very complex system of social and figurative institutions. The Sinai covenant, in its most comprehensive sense, included the whole body of laws and ordinances, promises and threats, which God made known to his people by Moses; hence, the book in which he recorded them is called the *book of the covenant.* Exod. xxiv. 3—8.; xxxiv. 10—27. Deut. xxix. 1.

Notwithstanding this lax and general application of the word covenant, it must be remembered, that, in strictness of speech, the *matter* of the Sinai covenant consisted of the ten commandments, which were proclaimed, and written on stones, by God himself; and all the succeeding statutes and ordinances, are to be considered as so many appendages connected with it. Accordingly it is said, "He wrote upon the tables the words of the covenant, the ten commandments. He declared unto you his covenant, which he commanded you to perform, even ten commandments, and he wrote them upon two tables of stone." Exod. xxxiv. 28. Deut. iv. 13. see also Deut. v. 2—22.; ix. 9—11.; x. 1—5.

The covenant made with the Israelites, consisted of precepts wisely adapted to their peculiar circumstances, and enforced by suitable promises and threats. Moses solicited their deliberate consent,

and earnestly urged them to be obedient; but they had no discretionary power to give or withhold their consent at pleasure. Therefore this covenant differed entirely from a bargain or treaty, agreed on with the equal deliberation and free consent of human parties. It was enjoined on them by the supreme authority of JEHOVAH, and they were bound to submit to its terms, and obey them as his servants. As the matter of this covenant consisted of precepts, it was altogether distinct from the two former, which consisted of promises; yet it was similar to them in its general nature, as a special institution or settlement, established between God and a certain class of his creatures, whom he had chosen for that purpose.

4. God made a particular covenant with *Phinehas.* The Lord said to Moses, "Behold, I give unto him my covenant of peace: and he shall have it, and his seed after him, even the covenant of an everlasting priesthood; because he was zealous for his God, and made an atonement for the sins of the people." Numb. xxv. 10—13. The matter of this covenant consisted of the divine promise, that he and his posterity should have the honourable privilege of an everlasting priesthood, to minister in the sanctuary in behalf of the Israelites. It had not the shadow of a bargain between God and Phinehas. It was obtained without solicitation, as a free gift, intended to be a lasting memorial of his distinguishing zeal, and an encouragement to his posterity. Like all the former covenants, it was a special institution of God, founded exclusively on his supreme authority and goodness.

5. God made a covenant with *king David.* When Saul, the former king of Israel, provoked the Lord to reject him and his family, the prophet Samuel was commissioned to anoint David, the son of Jesse, to be his successor. David was early rendered conspicuous among the tribes, by his successful combat with Goliath the champion of the Philistines. The manner in which his victory was celebrated, excited the jealousy and hatred of Saul, who by various

means sought his destruction. After the death of Saul, his family made war against the house of David for several years; but at length their opposition ceased; the Lord made him king over all the tribes of Israel, and gave him victory over all his numerous enemies. King David shewed his gratitude to God for exalting him from a low station to be the governor of his people, by removing the ark of the covenant from the state of obscurity in which it had continued during the reign of Saul, and placing it in a magnificent tent which he had erected for it in the capital of his kingdom. He then informed the prophet Nathan, that he desired to build a splendid house for it, as the habitation of the God of Israel. These events are largely detailed in the history of the life of David, particularly 2 Sam. v. vi. vii. 1, 2. 1 Chron. xi. to xvi.

The Lord sent his servant Nathan to restrain David from building the house that he had proposed, because he had been much engaged in bloody wars; and to inform him that the honour of building a habitation for JEHOVAH, was reserved for his son and successor, whose reign was to be distinguished by the general peace and prosperity of the Israelites. The prophet was then directed to announce the divine covenant with David in the following words: "And when thy days be fulfilled, and thou shalt sleep with thy fathers, I will set up thy seed after thee, which shall proceed out of thy bowels, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build an house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom for ever. I will be his Father, and he shall be my son: if he commit iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men, and with the stripes of the children of men: but my mercy shall not depart away from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I put away before thee. And thine house and thy kingdom shall be established for ever before thee: thy throne shall be established for ever. According to all these words, and according to all this vision, so did Nathan speak to David." 2 Sam. vii. 12—17. 1 Chron. xvii. 1—15. This covenant with

David is devoutly celebrated and amplified in Ps. lxxxix. 3, 4, 19, 37. "I have made a covenant with my chosen, I have sworn unto David my servant, Thy seed will I establish for ever, and build up thy throne to all generations," &c. And again, in Ps. cxxxii. 11, 12. "The Lord hath sworn in truth unto David, he will not turn from it, Of the fruit of thy body will I set upon thy throne. If thy children will keep my covenant, and my testimony that I shall teach them; their children also shall sit upon thy throne for evermore." The whole of these Psalms should be deliberately consulted, and explained by the original words of this covenant, as they were recorded by Samuel.

It is evident from these passages, that the covenant in question was made between the God of Israel and king David literally understood; that it had nothing in it of the nature of a bargain between equal parties; and that it consisted of the free promise of JEHOVAH, that he would raise up a son to David to build his house, and establish his throne in the line of his posterity to all generations. David was informed, that if his seed should commit iniquity, God would chasten them with the rod of a father, but that he would never take his mercy from them, as he had taken it from Saul. The Lord confirmed this covenant with his sacred oath, and David received it with faith, joy, and thanksgiving.

This covenant received an early and literal accomplishment. Solomon obtained the peaceable possession of his father's throne. He had the honour of building a temple for God; and in the presence of the tribes, whom he assembled to witness the dedication of it, he gratefully recognised the faithfulness of God in fulfilling the promise that he had made in his covenant with David, saying, "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, who spake with his mouth unto David my father, and hath with his hand fulfilled it. And it was in the heart of David my father, to build a house for the name of the Lord God of Israel. And the Lord said unto David my father, Whereas it was in thine heart to build an

house unto my name, thou didst well that it was in thine heart. Nevertheless, thou shalt not build the house, but thy son that shall come forth out of thy loins, he shall build the house unto my name. And the Lord hath performed his word that he spake, and I am risen up in the room of David my father, and sit on the throne of Israel, as the Lord promised, and have built an house for the name of the Lord God of Israel." 1 Kings viii. 12—20. When Solomon dedicated the temple, God renewed that covenant with him respecting the stability of his throne, which he had made with his father, and forewarned him of the correction which awaited himself and his posterity in the event of committing iniquity. 1 Kings ix. 1—9. 2 Chron. vii. 12—22.

The subsequent history of David's successors, shews how the Lord chastened them for iniquity, without casting them off, as he had rejected the house of Saul. When Solomon declined from the ways of his father, God was angry with him, and said, "Forasmuch as this is done of thee, and thou hast not kept my covenant and my statutes which I have commanded thee, I will surely rend the kingdom from thee, and will give it to thy servant. Notwithstanding, in thy days I will not do it, for David thy father's sake; but I will rend it out of the hand of thy son. Howbeit, I will not rend away all the kingdom: but I will give one tribe to thy son, for David my servant's sake. And I will for this afflict the seed of David, but not for ever." 1 Kings xi. 9—13, 39.

The outward glory of David's house was only figurative and temporary, the dominion of his successors gradually declined, and, about four hundred years after his death, they were carried captive to Babylon, and the temple of Solomon was consumed with fire. The aspect of these events was so very dark and discouraging, that the godly felt as if the Lord had made void the covenant of his servant. We may judge of the views that they had of it, by the mournful complaint in Ps. lxxxix. 38—51.

Notwithstanding these outward trials, the divine

covenant with David was everlasting, well ordered in all things, and sure. 2 Sam. xxiii. 5. Therefore the Lord raised up various prophets to comfort the hearts of his people, by asserting its stability, explaining its spiritual import, and predicting its ultimate accomplishment, by the birth of a son to sit on the throne of David, and restore his tabernacle that had fallen down, and rule over all nations for ever. A few of their words may be quoted as a faint specimen: "Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given, and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called, Wonderful, Counsellor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David and upon his kingdom, to order it and to establish it with judgment and with justice, from henceforth even for ever. Behold the days come, saith the Lord, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a king shall reign and prosper, and shall execute justice and judgment in the earth. In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely: and this is his name whereby he shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS: For thus saith the Lord, David shall never want a man to sit upon the throne of the house of Israel. If you can break my covenant of the day, and my covenant of the night: then may also my covenant be broken with David my servant, that he should not have a son to reign upon his throne. In that day will I raise up the tabernacle of David that is fallen, and close up the breaches thereof, and I will raise up his ruins, and I will build it as in the days of old." See the whole of Isa. ix. 6, 7.; xi. Jer. xxiii. 5, 6.; xxxiii. 14—26. Amos ix. 11.

These promises and many others of similar import, referred to the coming and exaltation of Jesus Christ, who was descended from David according to the flesh, and appointed by God the Father to build the New Testament church as his living temple, and reign over all nations for ever, as the king of Zion. As God's covenant with David had an ultimate

reference to these important events, it is represented as receiving its complete and everlasting accomplishment in them. When the angel announced the birth of Jesus to his mother, he said, "Fear not, Mary, for, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name Jesus. And the Lord God shall give him the throne of his father David. And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever, and of his kingdom there shall be no end." Zachariah said, "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, who hath raised up an horn of salvation for us, in the house of his servant David." Luke i. 26—33, 67—70. When the apostle Peter began to preach Christ, he said, "Men and brethren, let me freely speak unto you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his sepulchre is with us unto this day; therefore being a prophet, and knowing that *God had sworn with an oath to him*, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne; he seeing this before, spake of the resurrection of Christ," &c. Acts ii. 29—36. See also Acts xiii. 22—37.; xv. 13—17.

In these passages king David, with whom God had entered into a covenant which he confirmed with his oath, is clearly distinguished from his son Jesus Christ, by whose exaltation and reign that covenant was fulfilled. Therefore nothing could tend more to darken this subject, than to represent the covenant which God made with David, as made with David's son and Lord; or to say that God had sworn personally to his own son Jesus Christ in a covenant made with him before the foundation of the world. The covenant in question nearly concerned Christ; yet it was not made with himself, but with his father David; and the birth, exaltation, and everlasting reign of Christ, were the principal things promised to David, of which the temporal reign of his immediate successors was only the shadow and pledge.

6. God has made a new covenant in the last days. This covenant was announced and summed up in

Jeremiah xxxi. 31—34. As we shall afterward have occasion to consider its comprehensive import, it would be improper to enter upon it at present; only it may be observed, that the words now quoted, are affirmed in the most unequivocal manner, to constitute what is properly called the new covenant;—that according to their obvious meaning, it corresponds with all the other covenants which have been mentioned, as a special divine institution, settlement, appointment, or dispensation;—and that, like them, it has nothing in it of the nature of a human treaty or bargain.

Before we proceed to what was next proposed, it may be proper to notice certain things which some may be disposed to allege in the shape of objection or question.

1. It may seem strange to some, that none of the covenants recorded in Scripture, which were made between particular men, have been referred to for the purpose of explaining the nature of the new covenant; such as those between Abraham and Abimelech, Jacob and Laban, David and Jonathan.

We have already seen, that a covenant, exclusively devised by the Divine wisdom, and established by the Divine authority, differs essentially from any covenant or bargain settled between fellow creatures, on the ground of their mutual deliberation and equal consent. Nothing could be more fallacious than to illustrate a covenant made by JEHOVAH with any of the works of his hands, by accommodating it to the various circumstances of any treaty formed between limited mortals. By avoiding this kind of illustration, we shun a source of perplexity and misapprehension: by applying the various divine covenants to explain each other, we keep on sure ground that cannot fairly be disputed.

2. It may seem strange to others, that so many divine covenants have been mentioned, as they have been accustomed to believe that God made only two, the covenant of works, and the covenant of grace.

The Sinai covenant, and the new covenant, have a very conspicuous place in the Scripture; and they

are frequently contrasted, on account of their distinct and opposite qualities; but it is never affirmed that they were the only covenants which God made. All the others that have been mentioned, are plainly ascribed to him; and we have seen in what they consisted. Nothing has been introduced as a divine covenant which is not so denominated in the record: consequently all must be admitted as illustrative of each other.

3. It may seem still more strange, if not also offensive to certain persons, that nothing has been said of the covenant of works which God made with Adam in his state of innocence, for himself and all his posterity.

It is readily admitted that God created the parents of the human race in his own image, with the great comprehensive law of love in their hearts,—that he gave them a special precept for the trial of their obedience, forbidding them to eat of the tree of knowledge,—and that their cheerful subjection was enforced by the happiness of the condition in which they were placed, and the prospect of death which was the punishment threatened in the event of disobedience. Their subsequent history shews, that they speedily violated the law of their Creator, and thereby provoked his righteous displeasure, lost his holy image by which they had been dignified, became liable to death, transmitted their corrupt nature to their offspring, and involved the whole human race in sin and death. It is perfectly evident that Adam represented all his natural posterity, and that they all sinned in him, and so became completely depraved in heart, and liable to death with all its unknown horrors.

If the peculiar precept that was given to Adam, had been termed a covenant in Scripture, there is nothing in its nature which could have in the slightest degree opposed the view of a divine covenant that has been given in the foregoing observations; but as it is not evidently so denominated, that name ought not to be imposed. Some indeed suppose that it is alluded to in Hosea vi. 7. which they ren-

der, "But they, like Adam, have transgressed the covenant." There is no manifest necessity for this departure from the common version. Adam was the common name that the Creator gave to humankind of both sexes, to distinguish them from the various orders of inferior creatures, and the word is rendered in the Greek version by ανθρωπος, denoting man in general as a fallen depraved creature. But admitting the propriety of the proposed alteration, how very inadequate a foundation would it afford for that complex theory of a covenant of works between God and Adam, which some have devised? When the writers of the New Testament speak of the old covenant, they never refer in the most distant manner to Adam as a party concerned in it, but to the Israelites, with whom they affirm in the most positive terms, that it was established at Mount Sinai. Gal. iv. 24. Heb. viii. 8, 9. Let any candid person review all the passages that have been advanced in support of the above examples, and he will be constrained to admit, that all these divine institutions are repeatedly termed covenants in the most explicit manner, and that what is said to shew that a covenant was made with our first parents, is as nothing compared with the evidence which has been produced in support of each of the covenants that have been mentioned. On the whole, we may safely conclude, that a divine covenant denotes some special institution, settlement, appointment, or dispensation of God, which is so termed in his word.

III. Let us now consider *the propriety and the advantages* of strictly adhering to this view of a covenant which has been given. This may be necessary for the satisfaction of those who have been long accustomed to associate all the circumstances of a human bargain with the covenants that are ascribed to God. To such persons, the simple explanation of a divine covenant which has now been offered, will appear altogether lame and defective. They should remember that our proper business

with the Scriptures, does not consist in mending or embellishing them with fanciful theories, but in fairly searching out their obvious meaning, and receiving it as the truth of God. What has been suggested does not in the least degree diminish the importance of any of God's covenants, nor confound one of them with another, nor render them less profitable for spiritual edification and comfort. On the contrary, this simple account of the nature of the covenants which are ascribed to the Divine Being, is peculiarly advantageous, for various reasons:

1. It is *most scriptural.* It has been deliberately and exclusively taken from the Scripture. It has the unqualified support of all those passages which treat most clearly and fully of the subject. It has the consent of the whole inspired volume, without being at variance with a single text. Any serious inquirer may be satisfied on this head, by comparing the passages that have been produced, with the few very remote passages that have been offered in support of the complex notion of a bargain made by the Almighty. This reason might alone be sufficient to satisfy those who are actuated by the prevailing love of truth: but,

2. The view of a divine covenant that has been given, is *most comprehensive.* It corresponds equally with all the institutions of God that are termed covenants in Scripture, and includes all the parts of which they respectively consist, whether precepts or promises, whether made with only one person or with many, and whether in reference to earthly or to spiritual and heavenly things. It admits all that the Scriptures say concerning each of the covenants, and allows every article its proper place. It lays a broad foundation for the whole of that lofty superstructure of sacred truth, which is connected with this subject, and requires no aid of human conjecture or artifice.

3. This simple view of a divine covenant is *peculiarly conducive to the fair interpretation of the Holy Scriptures.* Having been taken from them, it agrees with all their various parts, like a key which moves

the bolt of its own lock, and turns freely in the wards of it, without injuring any part of them. Those who prefer an artificial theory of a divine covenant, corresponding with the several circumstances of a human bargain, are tempted to reject and disallow some of the covenants that are ascribed to God in his word, as *improper and deficient*, because they cannot find in them all the essential parts which their preconceived system requires. They likewise introduce covenants which the Scriptures have never revealed, namely a covenant of works with Adam, and a covenant of redemption made, as they have supposed, between God the Father and his Son from eternity. They greatly caricature those covenants which they acknowledge, by changing, allegorizing, and explaining away, what is plainly revealed concerning them. Instances in abundance will ocur to those who have read extensively on the subject. Now, that must be a false and dangerous theory, which leads men to do violence to the oracles of God, by making alterations and additions. That explanation of a covenant is surely most favourable to the just interpretation of them, which gives no occasion for rejecting any divine covenant which they record, or feigning any of which they are silent,—which agrees in the easiest manner with all that is said about every one of them, without depending on artificial reasoning, or straining a single text.

4. This general view of a divine covenant is *most conducive to faith and spiritual edification.* It is plain and intelligible, capable of being easily proved, believed, and applied. It furnishes no occasion for intruding into the incomprehensible counsels of the Most High, or presumptuously framing any imaginary dialogues between the Father and the Son, respecting the salvation of men. It assumes no doubtful principles, requires no faith in conjectural theories, lays no foundation for perplexing doubts, and requires the aid of no sophistical reasonings. In proportion as serious persons have been taught to cleave to certain crude notions of a cove-

nant, made from everlasting, in the counsels of peace, between the Father and the Son, as the ground of their hope, their faith is liable to be shaken, as soon as they begin to search the Scriptures for themselves, by the manifest absence of any thing like adequate evidence in them for those tenets which they had too rashly believed. In this way, many have been brought into extreme distress about their spiritual interest; and the perplexing doubts of some, have terminated in a fixed dislike to the Scriptures, a pernicious dependance on human authority, and rigid adherance to pious tradition, to the great peril of their souls; while others have been tempted to adopt the opposite extreme of fearless scepticism. The doctrines which the Holy Ghost has revealed, are all calculated to promote true godliness and comfort: but the obedience and joy that are founded on mistaken principles, must be deceitful and spurious. Those who receive the doctrine of the new covenant, in its native simplicity, are thereby set free from the slavish fear of unwelcome discoveries: they have no temptation to avoid or pervert the Scriptures; the more diligently they search them, the more their love of unadulterated truth is increased, and their faith, holiness, and peace are established.

1*st*, From this part of the subject we may conclude, that it is equally our duty and our interest to judge for ourselves respecting all the divine covenants, by implicitly receiving the testimony of Scripture concerning them, without adding, suppressing, or altering any thing.

2*d*, These covenants ought to have the same place in our minds, that they have in Scripture. They are all expressly recorded, distinctly recognized, and frequently introduced, as of the last importance in the system of revealed truth. The doctrine of them is extended through almost the whole of the sacred volume; and it is by the true knowledge of them, that all the facts, precepts, and promises are set in their proper light. To overlook or misrepresent any of them, in composing a connected view of theology, must render it as defective and erroneous as a

system of anatomy would be that contained no account of the bones, or described the bones of some inferior creature, instead of those of man.

3*d*, In order to give these covenants their due place, we must keep in view their comparative importance, carefully mark wherein they are distinct from each other, and observe how they are mutually connected. The covenant with Noah was intended to give mankind assurance of the future stability of the ordinary course of nature to the end of the world; and it is mentioned in connexion with the other covenants, only in the way of illustration, to shew that the accomplishment of their promises cannot possibly fail.—The covenant made with Phinehas, was intended to inspire the priests of his family with ardent zeal for the honour of God: it had no connexion with the new covenant, except in so far as the Levitical priesthood was a figure of good things to come.—God's covenant with Abraham included the promises of the new covenant, in like manner as the germ of a seed contains all its future fruit: yet the new covenant is as distinct from it, as the perfect fruit of a tree evidently is from the original germ or seed by which it is produced.—The same thing may be said of his covenant with king David: in it, God promised that the Messiah should descend from him according to the flesh, and be exalted to reign for ever as the King of Zion. All the invaluable blessings of the new covenant, are the fruits of his coming and reign. His birth was promised in the covenants made with Abraham and David, as the necessary introduction of his blissful reign: it was not promised in the new covenant, but presupposed, as by his ministry it was actually established.

The old or Sinai covenant was opposite in its nature to all the others that have been mentioned. It consisted of precepts that would not justify men before God, by reason of the depravity of their hearts.

It was intended to serve various particular purposes, as a temporary dispensation, to be in due time fulfilled, and honourably abolished. It did not

include the new covenant; but it was added to the Abrahamic covenant, to prepare the Israelites for receiving the new covenant, and that it might be introduced among them in the most advantageous manner. It was like the dead frame, which is erected to support a young and delicate plant, till it acquire strength to sustain itself, and which is afterwards removed as no longer necessary. It resembles the scaffolding, which is useful and necessary in the building of a lofty house, but which is removed from the finished mansion as an unsightly encumbrance. According to the more appropriate similitude used by the Holy Ghost, it served as a schoolmaster, whose instructions and discipline gradually prepare the heir of a rich inheritance for entering on the full possession of it at the period of mature age, and whose office is then superseded. As the patterns of any complex work of skill, furnish assistance toward the more perfect understanding of its proper form, and the utility of its component parts; so the institutions of Moses tended to excite an expectation of good things to come, in the breasts of the fathers; and they furnish christians with the most useful illustration of those heavenly things which are exhibited in the new covenant.

4th, Let us gratefully contemplate the ample accomplishment of the covenants of promise, which God made with Abraham and David, in the wonderful incarnation and atonement, exaltation and salvation of Jesus Christ. The Gospel denotes the glad tidings of the accomplishment of the promises that had been made to the fathers. After the apostles were endewed with the Holy Ghost, they delighted to exhibit these covenants, to illustrate them by the writings of the prophets, and shew how all things that had been foretold by God, had been fulfilled, in and by Jesus of Nazareth, through whom they proclaimed pardon and complete salvation according to the tenor of the new covenant. The manner in which they exhibited the covenants in their connexion, and applied them to the conscience of their hearers, is set before us in the most interesting form, in Acts

ii. 22—39.; iii. 12—26.; xiii. 16—39.; Rom. iv.; and Gal. iii. and iv. throughout. It is from ignorance of the true economy of the divine covenants, that too many persons, deemed orthodox in sentiment, account these passages dark and insipid, when compared with certain kinds of modern preaching. As the same Gospel is now published to the Gentiles, to make them partakers of the blessings of Abraham, we ought to feel as deep an interest in these apostolic declarations, and be as grateful for the information imparted, and the benefits exhibited by them, as the persons to whom they were first addressed.

5. Let us embrace the new covenant for ourselves, and thereby secure a personal interest in all its promises. Abraham embraced the divine promise, although its accomplishment was far distant, and its principal benefits were very obscurely set before him. The spiritual and heavenly things which he and the other patriarchs earnestly desired to see, have been abundantly realized; they are clearly unfolded in the New Testament, and freely tendered to the guilty and destitute. The new covenant demands our cordial reception, as the gracious voice of JEHOVAH. Those who reject his great salvation, shall be treated at last as irreconcilable adversaries; let us therefore imitate the laudable example of Abram, by embracing the divine proclamation of mercy with undoubting confidence; thus shall we obtain the honour of being his spiritual seed, and heirs according to the covenant of promise.

I am inclined to think, having read before that the Gilt may be having too much on this passage — which the Lord [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]

PART SECOND.

OF THE INTIMATIONS WHICH THOSE WHO WERE UNDER THE OLD COVENANT, RECEIVED OF GOD'S DESIGN OF MAKING A NEW COVENANT IN THE DAYS OF THE MESSIAH.

HEBREWS VIII. 7, 8, 9. *For if that first covenant had been faultless, then should no place have been sought for the second, &c.*

IN order to avoid mistakes respecting religion, and attain correct apprehensions of divine truth, it is of the utmost importance, that our general principles and rules of interpretation be just and well founded, as they naturally influence all those conclusions which are drawn from the Scriptures, by the application of them. Many passages are daily quoted from them, in support of various human systems of doctrine, that are not only different, but even diametrically opposite; yet the several tenets which compose each distinct system, commonly possess a considerable degree of harmony and consistency among themselves. This apparent self-consistency, naturally results from the predominating influence of the principles of interpretation, on which these several systems of opinions are respectively founded. False and deceitful first principles necessarily pervert and metamorphose those portions of sacred writ to which they are applied. The subject now before us, demands the strictest caution in this respect; for in consequence of the rash adoption of erroneous general principles, many have deviated widely from the truth, and from each other, respecting the nature of the new covenant, the matter of which it consists, the parties between whom it is made, and even the very existence of it.

The fatal mistake of the misbelieving Jews may be mentioned as an instructive example. They

conceived that the law of Moses was absolutely perfect, and that it was intended by its divine Author to be unalterable and eternal. The solemn manner in which it had been given from Sinai, in connexion with those passages which represented certain rites and ordinances as everlasting statutes, induced them rashly to conclude, that their whole system of laws was appointed to be of perpetual obligation; and that an attempt to change it, or set aside any of its ordinances, as no longer necessary, amounted to nothing less than blasphemy and open rebellion against the God of Israel. Having been deceived by this mistaken principle, they considered it their bounden duty to reject the Gospel of Christ, and slay his apostles, because they taught that the old covenant and its ordinances were only of a temporary and fading nature, that God had established another covenant by Jesus Christ, and that the ancient customs were to be laid aside. They stirred up the people and the elders against Stephen, and said, "this man ceaseth not to speak blasphemous words against this holy place, and the law: for we have heard him say, that Jesus of Nazareth shall change the customs which Moses delivered us." Acts vi. 9—14. Many of the Jews who believed in Jesus, retained the same pernicious error, and became the zealous corrupters of his genuine Gospel, as we learn from their influence in the churches of Antioch and Galatia. Even in Jerusalem, where better things might have been expected, they continued to labour under very great misapprehension. Hence, when the apostle Paul visited them with the charitable contributions of many Gentile churches, they said, "Thou seest, brother, how many thousands of Jews there are who believe, and they are all zealous of the law: and they are informed of thee, that thou teachest all the Jews who are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, saying, that they ought not to circumcise their children, neither to walk after the customs," &c. We need not therefore wonder at the tumult which their unbelieving brethren soon raised against him, "crying out, Men of Israel,

help: this is the man that teacheth all men every where against the law, and this place:" &c. Acts xxi. 20—30. Had this fundamental maxim of the Jews been well founded, every legitimate conclusion deduced from it must have been true and harmless, and their conduct in opposing the doctrine of the apostles would have been laudable; but as it was only a groundless assumption, all the conclusions which they deduced from it, were false and pernicious, and the blind zeal with which it inspired them, terminated in their utter destruction, as a warning to future generations.

To avoid equally fatal self-deception respecting the new covenant, we have made an appeal to the sacred oracles, to ascertain the general nature of the divine covenants, and discovered that they ought not to be confounded with a bargain or mutual treaty between fellow-creatures, but that they denote some special institution or settlement established between God and some person or persons chosen by himself. This general view of a covenant, corresponds entirely with all the institutions so termed, which are ascribed to the Almighty in his word, and particularly to the new covenant.

Agreeably to the method formerly proposed, we may now consider the *various intimations* which those who were under the old covenant received of God's design of making a new covenant in the days of the Messiah, and afterward contemplate *the parties between whom* it is made.

Our *second* inquiry is concerning the *ancient intimations* of a new covenant that were given to the fathers. If any clear intimations of this nature can be produced, it will be seen that ignorance of what God had revealed to the Jews in that portion of his word which they acknowledged, was the cause of their blind zeal for the perpetual observance of the rites of the law; and consequently that their inveterate prejudices against the Gospel, and all the acts of violence which resulted from them, were completely inexcusable.

1. *The divine promise to Abraham* indicated the

approach of a better covenant than that which was established at Sinai. As the Jews boasted of their lineal descent from the patriarch, they ought to have understood the import of the covenant that God had made with him, and looked for its accomplishment. The language of it was, "In thee shall all families of the earth be blessed." And again, "In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed," Gen. xii. 3.; xxii. 18. True blessedness can signify nothing less than the happiness which our first parents forfeited by their early disobedience, namely, the favour, knowledge, and holy image of God, with the enjoyment of a suitable inheritance, adapted to the capacity and the necessity of rational creatures. The Gentiles were not made partakers of any such blessedness by the old covenant which was ratified by Moses. On the contrary, his law commanded the Israelites to slaughter all the nations of Canaan without mercy, and afterward keep themselves at the utmost distance from all the other nations, Deut. vii. Acts x. 28. While the old covenant continued with the Israelites, its institutions separated them from the rest of mankind as the peculiar people of God; and the Gentile nations were left to walk in their own ways, without the true God, and without hope. The law did not appoint any religious instructor for the heathen, nor require those who were under it to make any adequate effort to promote their spiritual interest. In order that the Gentile nations might enjoy the blessing of Abraham, it was necessary that the old covenant should be abolished, that its exclusive rites should be laid aside, and that another covenant should be established, with permission to those who had formerly been aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, to become fellow-heirs of it. Our great Apostle used this argument for the establishment of another covenant, to convince and instruct the ill-informed disciples in the churches of Galatia, who had manifested a foolish desire to be under the law themselves, and to impose the ri-

gid observance of its rites upon others. See his reasoning in Gal. iii. 1—18.

2. *The weakness and unprofitableness of the law* of Moses, indicated the making of a better covenant in the last days. It was incapable of advancing those who were under it, to a state of justification before God, as, in consequence of the weakness of the flesh, none of them would yield that perfect obedience which it required. It had no power to purify the heart from the love of sin, and restore the divine image. It furnished no satisfactory information respecting the means of acceptance with God, the certainty of a future state of everlasting retribution, or the way to unmingled felicity. It afforded no ground of hope to the dying, and gave no cheering prospect of a heavenly unfading inheritance. In consequence of the spiritual depravity of those who were under the law, it was calculated only to discover guilt which it could not take away, to excite and strengthen evil propensities which it could not eradicate, to alienate their hearts from God, and awaken the slavish overwhelming fear of his displeasure. As the Jews could neither obtain acceptance with God, nor renovation of heart, by the application of the law, they ought to have viewed it as only a temporary dispensation, and taken occasion from its weakness to look for something more profitable. Many passages of the Old Testament were calculated to produce a deep and humbling conviction of the insufficiency of the law. It denounced its curses against those who did not continue obedient to all its precepts. The sacrifices which it required, could make no atonement for sin, and those who presented them, instead of obtaining peace of conscience, only acknowledged thereby, that they were liable to divine condemnation. All had gone astray from God, no man could redeem his brother; and the study of the old covenant was calculated to shut up the guilty to the faith of a better revelation, which its defective nature gave them reason to expect. Deut. xxvii. 26. Ps. xiv. Isaiah i. 11—14.; lxvi. 3. These topics were

abundantly urged by the apostles to humble their Jewish brethren, to restrain them from trusting in their own imperfect righteousness, convince them of their need of a new covenant, and shew how they ought to have expected it, in consequence of the weakness of their law. Their powerful reasonings on this subject may be found in Rom. iii. 9—20. Gal. iii. 10, 19—24. Heb. vii. 18, 19.

3. *The figurative nature of the ordinances* of the old covenant, indicated the future establishment of another. The law appointed a worldly sanctuary, a Levitical priesthood, and the offering of many sacrifices, with peculiar rites. All these are largely described in Exod. xxv. to xl. and Levit. i. to ix. These ordinances were numerous and complex, burdensome and carnal. They were destitute of all intrinsic importance and value; they imparted no distinct or satisfactory information respecting unseen things; they did not atone the justice of God, nor pacify the consciences of the worshippers, nor could they inspire them with boldness in approaching the divine presence. The sacrifices which were required, brought sin to remembrance, without the power of removing it; and made the people feel their distance from God, without shewing them how to draw near so as to enjoy him for their portion. The rites of the law were not explained by Moses, nor was it possible for the Israelites to comprehend their spiritual import; but as he had been commanded to make all things according to the *pattern* that he had seen in the mount, they had reason to conclude that they were all intended as patterns of spiritual and heavenly things which were afterwards to be revealed; to believe that a Being of infinite wisdom and goodness, would not have instituted such a multitude of outward forms, without some important signification concealed under them as by a vail; and to hope that, at some future period, he would fully disclose the design of them, for the purpose of increasing the happiness of his people, and promoting a more enlightened and spiritual worship. The propriety of looking beyond the Levitical offerings for a greater

and more effectual sacrifice, was intimated by the pious Psalmist when he said, "Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire. Then said I, Lo, I come! I delight to do thy will, O my God!" The figurative design of the Levitical ordinances is asserted, and the argument on that ground for the making of a new covenant, is fully stated in the Epistle to the Hebrews. The following passages deserve to be attentively perused, as they shew how the Jews ought to have reasoned on the subject. Heb. viii. 4, 5.; ix. 1—11.; x. 1—14.

4. The approaching establishment of a new covenant, was intimated by the *prediction of Moses, that God would raise up another prophet like to himself*; "The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet like unto me; according to all that thou desiredst of the Lord thy God in Horeb, saying, Let me not hear again the voice of the Lord, that I die not. And the Lord said, I will raise them up a Prophet from their brethren like unto thee, and I will put my words in his mouth," &c. Deut. xviii. 15—19. This prediction was not fulfilled by the ministry of the ordinary prophets who were raised up among the Israelites, such as David, Isaiah, or Jeremiah; because they were not equal to Moses, nor did they perform any similar work. Moses was distinguished from the ordinary prophets who succeeded him, by conversing with God mouth to mouth, and receiving the revelation of his will in a near and intimate manner. Numb. xii. 6—8. Moses was employed to interpose between God and the people, as their mediator, to ratify a peculiar covenant between them, and introduce a complete system of ordinances connected with it. His prediction directed them to look for the appearing of a similar prophet, honoured with equal access to God; and to expect the establishment of a new covenant, and the appointment of a corresponding system of laws and ordinances by his ministry. It was amply fulfilled by the mediation of Christ, and the ratification of the new covenant by his blood. Peter therefore urged its accomplishment on the minds of his Jewish hearers, to remove their misapprehension, and per-

suade them to receive the promise of salvation which was tendered to them through his death. Acts iii. 22, 23.

5. God intimated the establishment of a new covenant, by promising to make an *essential change of the priesthood.* The Levitical priesthood was inseparably connected with the old covenant; Aaron and his sons were separated from their brethren, by the appointment of God, and consecrated to minister daily before him; and no Israelite of any other family was allowed to burn incense, or enter the sanctuary. The usurpation of Korah, who aspired to the honours of the priesthood, and the unprecedented judgments that followed, were recorded, to deter all who were not of the family of Aaron, from intermeddling with his sacred office. The leprosy with which the presumption of Uzziah was punished many years afterward, proved that even the kings of Judah had no title to minister at the altar. Numb. xvi.; xvii. 2 Chron. xxvi. 16—21.

Notwithstanding these express prohibitions and terrific warnings in support of the exclusive honours of Aaron and his sons, it was foretold that the Messiah was to be a descendant of king David, who was of the tribe of Judah, and also that he was to be invested with the office of a priest by the oath of JEHOVAH; that he was to be of the order of Melchizedek; and that his priesthood was to continue for ever. Ps. cx. 4. "The Lord hath sworn, and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek." Now, as the Messiah, being a descendant of David and not of Aaron, could not minister as a priest according to the law of Moses, this prediction concerning his priesthood, plainly indicated an approaching change of the law, and consequently of the old covenant, with which all the institutions of Moses had been intimately connected. The Jews ought to have expected such a change, and thankfully availed themselves of it, by presenting their addresses to the God of their fathers in the name of his Son, as the Mediator of a better covenant. This argument was largely stated, for the instruction of

those of them who had believed in him. "If therefore perfection were by the Levitical priesthood, (for under it the people received the law,) what further need was there that another priest should rise after the order of Melchizedek, and not be called after the order of Aaron. For the priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a change also of the law. And in as much as not without an oath he was made priest, by so much was Jesus made a surety of a better covenant." See the whole of Heb. vii.; and viii. 1—6.

6. The prophetic declaration, that the *ark of the covenant should not be visited* in the days of the Messiah, indicated the making of a new covenant. The old covenant was deposited in the ark, and all the males of Israel were commanded to visit it with their offerings, at the three great annual festivals. "Three times in a year shall all thy males appear before the Lord thy God, in the place which he shall choose: in the feast of unleavened bread, and in the feast of weeks, and in the feast of tabernacles: and they shall not appear before the Lord empty." Deut. xvi. 16. From the days of Joshua to Samuel they were appointed to assemble before the ark at Shiloh. After the destruction of Shiloh, the ark was fixed at Zion, by the pious care of David, where the people continued to assemble periodically for many ages; but the discontinuance of that practice was at length foretold by the Spirit of prophecy, "In those days, saith the Lord, they shall no more say, The ark of the covenant of the Lord: neither shall it come into mind, neither shall they remember it, neither shall they visit it, neither shall that be done any more." Jer. iii. 16. These words were connected with promises of the general prosperity of the people of God, notwitstanding their neglect of the ark. The divine approval of this change, which involved an essential departure from the ordinances of the old covenant, should have taught the Jews to expect another covenant, accompanied with new regulations for the service of God. Our Lord illustrated their prediction, by shewing the woman of

Samaria, that the practice of visiting the city of Jerusalem, as the appointed place of acceptable worship, was about to cease. "Jesus saith unto her, Woman, believe me, the hour cometh when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father: but the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth; for the Father seeketh such to worship him." John iv. 20—24. In connexion with this, we may farther observe, that,

7. The making of a new covenant was intimated by various clear predictions of *the general disobedience and rejection of the Jews, and the calling of the Gentiles to present acceptable offerings in all places of the earth.* "I am sought of them that asked not for me: I am found of them that sought me not. I have spread out my hands all the day long unto a rebellious people. The Lord God shall slay thee, and call his servants by another name. I have no pleasure in you, saith the Lord of Hosts, neither will I accept an offering at your hand. For from the rising of the sun, even unto the going down of the same, my name shall be great among the Gentiles, and in *every place incense shall be offered* unto my name, and a pure offering. In that day there shall be an altar to the Lord in the midst of the land of Egypt, and the Egyptians shall know the Lord in that day, and shall do sacrifice and oblation," &c. Isaiah lxv. 1, 2, 15.; xix. 18—22. Mal. i. 10, 11. These and many similar predictions indicated the melancholy effects of the general obstinacy of the Jews, and the consequent admission of the Gentiles to serve God in their room, without conforming to the requirements of the law. Nothing less could have been intended by these things, than a new communication of the divine will, accompanied with the enlightening influence of the Holy Spirit. This topic of proof was largely illustrated by the apostles, to reconcile the Jews to the new covenant, and dispose them to walk in love toward the converted Gentiles, whom God had called to be fellow-citizens with them. Rom. x. 12—20.; xi. 7—11.; xv. 8—12.

8. The approaching establishment of a new covenant, had been *expressly promised.* "Behold, the days come, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah; not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers," &c. No language, surely, could have been more explicit or satisfactory.

In the review of all these plain intimations which God had given the Jews, of his design of making a new covenant with his people in the days of the Messiah, it must seem very strange, that they generally believed in the perpetual stability of the old covenant, especially as they had violated it, and thereby exposed themselves to its tremendous curses. They ought to have felt their need of a covenant better adapted to the condition of guilty depraved creatures; to have waited for its promulgation with ardent desire; and thankfully accepted the exhibition of it by Christ and his apostles. As the covenant made with their fathers, was not intended to be perpetual, but only to introduce the heavenly blessings of the Messiah's covenant with greater effect, their blindness in pertinaciously adhering to it, and rejecting the Gospel, was as inexcusable, as its consequences were fatal. It will be our duty to take warning from the example of their obstinacy, that we may receive what God has revealed concerning the new covenant, without corrupting it by the dictates of carnal wisdom.

PART THIRD.

OF THE PARTIES BETWEEN WHOM THE NEW COVENANT IS MADE.

THE new covenant is made between the God of salvation, on the one hand, and the house of Israel and Judah, on the other. God is represented as the original contriver, the sovereign proposer, the efficient maker, and the faithful accomplisher of it. The other party with whom it is made, is termed the house of Israel and Judah. The people of God were so denominated, in allusion to the division of the twelve tribes into the two distinct kingdoms which were so named. The prophets commonly used highly figurative language, corresponding with the views and cirrumstances of those to whom their predictions were at first addressed: hence, their words require to be interpreted in a spiritual and evangelical manner, according to the superior light of the New Testament. Therefore, by the house of Israel and Judah we must not understand the natural posterity of Abraham, considered merely as such, but the genuine people of God, who are separated to him from among the nations. "For they are not all Israel who are of Israel; neither because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children: but in Isaac shall thy seed be called. That is, they who are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God; but the children of the promise are counted for the seed," Rom. ix. 6—8. The true Israel denotes all those, and those alone, who are made partakers of the faith of Abraham, and thereby constituted the children of God, and heirs of his promises; "For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abra-

ham's seed, and heirs according to the promise. For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature. And as many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them, and mercy, even upon the Israel of God." Gal. iii. 26—29.; vi. 15, 16. See also Rom. iv. 9—17. From these and many similar passages we may safely conclude, that the house of Israel and Judah comprehends all those who are made the children of God by a spiritual birth, being prepared thereby for serving him acceptably, and inheriting the kingdom which he has promised.

It will now be proper to consider some of the proofs which shew, that God and his spiritual Israel are the precise parties between whom the new covenant is made.

1. This is evident from the *most explicit declarations of Scripture.* The following texts deserve to be quoted as a specimen of the clear and satisfactory manner in which the Holy Ghost has spoken on this interesting subject: "I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel. This shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel," Jer. xxxi. 31, 33. These words are repeated and applied in the passage before us, and also in Heb. x. 16. Again, "I will make an everlasting covenant with them," Isa. lxi. 8. "They shall be my people, and I will be their God. And I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them to do them good," Jer. xxxii. 38, 40. "I will make with them a covenant of peace. Thus shall they know that I the Lord their God am with them, and that they, even the house of Israel, are my people. Moreover, I will make a covenant of peace with them, it shall be an everlasting covenant with them; I will be their God, and they shall be my people: and the heathen shall know that I the Lord do sanctify Israel," Ezek. xxxiv. 25, 30.; xxxvii. 26—28.

In these words the God of salvation is represented as making a covenant between himself as the principal party concerned, and his people as the other. This is repeated over and over, in various

forms, without any alteration of sentiment. Surely no language could be more plain or convincing.

2. The *harmonious consent of the whole Bible*, shews that God and his people are the proper parties between whom the new covenant is established. There is no other text at variance with the obvious meaning of the passages that have just now been produced. It is no where said that the new covenant is not made by God with his chosen people, nor is it ever represented as made between him and any other party than his people. That which is clearly affirmed in many texts of Scripture, and never opposed or disallowed by any other part of it, must be admitted as sacred truth; or how could any certainty respecting the mind of God be attained? In this conclusion we might safely rest with perfect assurance, though no additional evidence could be advanced; but,

3. The *correspondence between the two covenants* which is frequently stated, shews that the new covenant is made between God and his peculiar people, as the old formerly was. Their agreement in this respect is mentioned in Heb. viii. 6—10. and many of the other passages that have been quoted. None will deny that the old covenant was established between God and his ancient Israel whom he brought out of Egypt, and honoured above all the rest of mankind as his people. Now, as the house of Israel constituted the party with whom he made the old covenant, what could be more evident than that the new covenant is made with his spiritual Israel, or his peculiar people, of whom the fleshly Israelites were the appointed figure? His words plainly inform us that it is made between him and all those whom he is pleased to draw to himself as his people, and with them alone.

4. The *appointment of a Mediator between God and his people*, shews that they are the proper parties between whom the new covenant is made. That it was established by the interposition of a Mediator, is affirmed in verse 6. and chap. ix. 15; xii. 24. "He is the Mediator of a better covenant, which

was established upon better promises. For this cause he is the Mediator of the new covenant," &c. Our apostle informs us, that "a mediator is not a mediator of one," which would be inconsistent, but of both the separate parties between whom he negociates. This plainly supposes, that where a mediator is employed, there must be two parties concerned, who are distinct from himself, as well as from each other. Nothing surely would be more incongruous than to represent the same person as both a mediator and a party. The proper business of a mediator consists in treating between two parties, in order to their reconciliation. Therefore, if Christ be the Mediator of the new covenant, that covenant cannot be made between the Father and himself, but between the Father and guilty men, for the purpose of reconciling them to him as his people.

5. The *matter of which the new covenant consists*, shews that it is made between God and his people. This is set before us in verses 10—12. It consists wholly of comprehensive and precious promises. These promises are wisely adapted to the circumstances and necessities of God's people, as guilty creatures, that need to be pardoned, and renewed in heart. It is to them that they are addressed. They obtain an exclusive interest in them, and they shall eternally enjoy their accomplishment, as the heirs of God. This covenant requires nothing from any other party, it promises nothing to any other, and it will be fulfilled to none else.

6. The *token of the new covenant*, which the people of God are commanded to receive, shews that it is established between him and them, as the parties concerned. When the old covenant was ratified, the blood of certain victims was sprinkled upon the Israelites, and they were appointed to eat and drink in the presence of JEHOVAH, as a token of peace and friendship, Exod. xxiv. 3—11. Agreeably to these figures, the new covenant was ratified with the blood of Christ. Heb. ix. 11—24. Now, as Moses sprinkled the blood of the old covenant upon the Israel-

ites, with whom it was established, and appointed them to eat and drink before the Lord, by partaking of peace-offerings; Jesus, the Mediator of the new covenant, sanctifies the people of God, with whom it is made, by washing them from their sins with his own precious blood; and he has appointed them to eat and drink in the divine presence, by partaking of the symbols of his flesh and blood. Matt. xxvi. 26—28. As the old covenant was made with them to whom the peculiar token of it was given, the new covenant must also be made with those who are called to receive the sacred token of it.

7. The *gracious exhibition of the new covenant to the guilty*, shews that it is established with all that embrace it according to the divine proclamation. Its blessings are published to the poor and helpless, as the free gift of God, in Isa. lv. 1—3. "Ho! every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters; and he that hath no money, come ye, buy and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money, and without price. Incline your ear, and come unto me; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you." We shall afterwards have occasion to shew that this everlasting covenant is the same with that which is under consideration. Its blessings are tendered to all that hear this voice of mercy; and those who comply with it, become partakers of the sure mercies of David. God promises to make a covenant with those who accept his gracious call, which plainly shews that it is established between him and all his genuine people, as the undoubted parties concerned in it.

As these proofs cannot but appear satisfactory to the candid mind, it may seem very strange to some, that any serious christians have ever taught otherwise. Highly respected teachers have affirmed, that the new covenant was made from all eternity, between the Father and the Son. Others have termed this ancient transaction, the covenant of redemption, and distinguished it from the new covenant of grace, which they admit to be made between God and his people. Others, with not less zeal, have wholly

denied this distinction, and maintained, that the covenant of redemption is precisely the same with the covenant of grace; yet they represent this covenant as made before the foundation of the world, in the council of peace between the Father and his only Son, as the head and representative of all the elect. Some have gone the length of composing a form of deliberate consultation between these divine persons, in conjunction with the Holy Ghost, and of exhibiting the result of their deliberations, respecting the salvation of sinners, in the shape of a human contract. As the serious enquirer may wish to understand not only the plain way of truth, but also the principal by-paths which have drawn many into a labyrinth of error; it may be profitable, before concluding the present discourse, briefly to state and obviate the chief grounds of these contradictory speculations, that have been too frequently connected with the subject before us.

1. Some have been led to consider the new covenant as made between God the Father and his Son, in consequence of having previously changed the the nature of it from a divine appointment, capable of being settled with fallen creatures, to a *bargain involving meritorious and difficult conditions*, which none could fulfil except Jesus Christ. The conditions which they introduced, comprehended nothing less than perfect obedience to the whole law of Moses, and complete satisfaction, in the way of atonement for all the transgressions of God's chosen. Finding that none of the human race could perform these things, they naturally transferred the burden to Christ, and represented his active and passive obedience, as the condition of the covenant; concluding that since he, and he alone, had fulfilled all that the law and justice of God required, the covenant must have been made by the Father with himself, as the only proper party in it.

The Scriptures certainly do teach, that Christ redeemed his people with his own blood, and brought in an everlasting righteousness for their justification; but they never teach that the new covenant

was made with him, nor that it demands a perfect obedience from those with whom it is made, as a meritorious condition. They shew, on the contrary, that he redeemed his people *from* the bondage and condemnation of the old covenant, in order that, on the ground of his finished work, the new covenant might be introduced in its stead—freely exhibited to helpless sinners, as a foundation of hope,—and actually established, as a new dispensation of gracious and sure promises, to all that embrace it. The obedience and death of Christ were undoubtedly necessary for the purpose of fulfilling the old covenant, taking it out of the way, and confirming the better one in the place of it; but as the explicit declarations of the Holy Ghost assure us, that the new covenant consists exclusively of free unconditional promises, we are not at liberty to enlarge it according to our own imagination, by representing those things which were intended to prepare the way for it, as constituting so many essential parts of itself. The highly important place which Christ sustains in relation to it, will claim our future attention; but it can neither be acceptable to him, nor profitable for ourselves, to change its nature, or make any addition to the simple account of it which God has given in his own words, and to which the title of a new covenant is expressly assigned. Fallen men are certainly very incompetent for entering into covenant with their Creator, on the ground of any meritorious conditions depending on themselves; but there can be no inconsistency in recognising God and his people, as the parties in a covenant consisting exclusively of free promises made on his part, and established by the interposition of a competent Mediator.

2. Some have *confounded king David with Jesus Christ, and God's covenant made with David, with the new covenant;* and then concluded that the latter of these must have been made with Christ. When such persons are requested to assign their reason for affirming that God made the new covenant with his Son from all eternity, they commonly repeat the

following words of the Psalmist as quite sufficient. "I have made a covenant with my chosen." Ps. lxxxix. 3.

If we turn to these words, and consider them in connexion with the rest of the psalm, we shall see that they refer entirely to the covenant which God made with David. It will be no adequate reply, to say that a greater than the patriarch David was intended; for it is admitted, that the promise which God confirmed to David with an oath, had an ultimate reference to his future Son and Lord: but it must be remembered, that the promise of an heir to sit for ever on David's throne, was not made to that heir immediately, but to David himself concerning him. This will be evident to any unprejudised person who shall deliberately compare the whole of the psalm referred to with the original record of the divine covenant with David in 2 Sam. vii. 12—17. The same is farther confirmed by the testimony of Peter: "David being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath *to him*, that of the fruit of his loins he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne," &c. Acts ii. 30. The everlasting reign of Christ was the principal thing promised in the covenant with David; yet that a covenant was not made with Christ, but with David himself, as his father according to the flesh. As David was a distinct person from his future heir, the covenant made with him was distinct from the new covenant. In the former, God promised to raise up the Messiah to sit on his throne: in the latter, he promises to bless his people with all spiritual blessings, through the Messiah. The birth and obedience, death and exaltation, of Christ, are all presupposed as indispensably necessary to the establishment of the new covenant, and the accomplishment of its promises: yet they are not directly included as making any part of the matter of which it consists. This is evident from the express words of it, ver. 10—12. The propriety of distinguishing between David and Christ, is not opposed by the prediction in which the reign of the latter was foretold, under the name of David, as the

Shepherd and Prince of God's chosen. David was an eminent figure of the Messiah, who was appointed to reign for ever on his throne; and therefore he was announced to the Jews under the name of his great progenitor; but the covenant of peace which was promised in the same passage, is not represented as made by God with the Messiah, but with his flock or chosen people. See Ezek. xxxiv. 23—25.

3. Some have *confounded various ancient predictions with God's eternal counsels, and both with the new covenant*, and thence concluded that it was made before the world began, between the Father and his Son. The principal passages that have been used in this manner, are, Ps. xl. 6—10. Is. xlii. 6, 7.; xlix. 4—8.

These predictions concerning the Messiah, announced the faithfulness of his personal ministry, his general lack of success among the Jews, his atoning death, and the subsequent calling of the Gentiles to share his salvation; but they do not say that the Father entered into any covenant with him, or that the new covenant was made with him as one of the proper parties in it.

In forming consistent views of divine truth, it is necessary to distinguish between those things that differ, so as neither to confound them, nor set them in opposition to each other. The infinite understanding and certain foreknowledge of God, are abundantly declared in his word. Before the foundation of the world, he foresaw the apostacy of the whole human race, made choice of a certain determinate number of them to salvation, and freely predestinated them to all the necessary means thereof. The peculiar people of God were all chosen in Christ as their future head; and the whole plan of their redemption, regeneration, justification, sanctification, and complete glorification, was unalterably arranged in the Divine mind from everlasting. This eternal purpose was gradually developed by the predictions and promises of the Old Testament; the personal ministry, death, and exaltation of Christ; the early promulgation of the Gospel; the effusion

of the Holy Spirit; and the conversion of multitudes of Jews and Gentiles; and it will be completely fulfilled at last, by the advancement of all the elect to inherit eternal glory. Rom. viii. 28—30. Eph. i. 3—10. These, and many similar passages, demand our faith in the ancient, sovereign, wise, gracious, and comprehensive purpose of God respecting the redemption of sinners by Jesus Christ, and the establishment of a new covenant with all the heirs of promise, through him: but the divine purpose is entirely distinct from the early revelation of it by the prophets, and likewise from the succeeding accomplishment of it. Though God determined from eternity to enter into a covenant with his people, it is never said that that covenant was actually made from eternity, nor at any other period before the old covenant was fulfilled and abolished.

We are abundantly informed, that God called his beloved Son to be the Saviour of his people; that he sent him into the world for that purpose, anointed him to his office with the Holy Ghost, furnished him with a message to be published to the Jews, appointed him to yield obedience even unto death, engaged to hold his hand and grant him seasonable assistance, promised to honour him with a glorious reward, and encouraged him to ask the heathen for his inheritance. The Son accepted his Father's commission, humbled himself as a servant, perfectly accomplished the difficult work which had been assigned to him, poured out his complaint on account of the obstinacy of his hearers, placed unlimited confidence in the divine faithfulness, and fervently prayed for all that glory which had been promised him. These things are fully declared in Scripture, but they are never represented as constituting the matter of the new covenant; and that covenant is not represented as consisting of promises made to Christ, but of spiritual and eternal blessings promised to the Israel of God, as the result of his everlasting love manifested through the atoning death of his only Son.

4. Some have represented the new covenant as an ancient treaty or bargain between God and his Son, from a *desire to be profound in knowledge.* The love of mystery is a common and powerful principle. Hence the natural meaning of the Scriptures has often been despised as too superficial and simple, while much labour has been bestowed to educe from them some abstruse interpretation, not obvious to common apprehension. On this ground very elaborate attempts have been made to form the early revelations of the Messiah, the commission that he received from the Father, and all the promises that were made both to himself and to his people, into one comprehensive system; and to dignify the whole with the name of the covenant of grace, made before the foundation of the world in the council of the Godhead. This theory has been highly esteemed by many serious persons, as a kind of master-key for unlocking the secret treasures of divine knowledge, which are kept hid from all who are not in possession of it. Speculations of this sort have obtained much popularity. The acquisition of sublime discoveries which are not generally understood, is highly gratifying to the mind. Hence, many to whom the new covenant of the Bible, would have appeared by far too plain and unadorned to be interesting, have been charmed, and exalted above measure, by the supposed discovery of the secret and eternal consultation of the divine persons about the plan of redemption, and their harmonious agreement in a mutual contract, to be disclosed and accomplished in the fulness of time, under the name of the co venant of grace. These additions that have been made to the plain statements of the Scriptures, seem so important, and so far above what would have occurred to ordinary readers, that they believe none could ever have found out such mysteries in them, except persons of uncommon learning and the most profound spiritual discernment. Placing implicit credit in the superiority of their teachers, they consider themselves happy in having such wonderful discoveries familiarly laid before them, and hold them

so very tenaciously, that they are much more apt to be irritated than edified by an appeal to the naked truth.

In opposition to this fondness for mystery, it should be remembered, that human imagination is no proper test of truth, and a very dangerous expositor of Scripture. The wisdom of man is foolishness with God; and all those embellishments of sacred things which result from it, are worse than useless, as they promote self-conceit, and exclude the only true light. Those who slight the obvious import of the sure record, to search after something more recondite and marvellous, render the word of no effect, and expose their souls to the most fatal delusions.

1. From what has been suggested we may conclude, that *men are accountable for all the pernicious consequences of those false principles of interpretation which they have the means of detecting and avoiding.* The false principles which the Jews had adopted respecting the perpetuity of the Sinai covenant, naturally induced them to reject and crucify the Son of God as a deceiver. As the Old Testament furnished them sufficient intimations of the establishment of a new covenant in the days of the Messiah, their gross misapprehension was highly criminal, and their unbelieving opposition to the Gospel which resulted from it, was justly punished by the signal calamities which Jesus foretold before his death, Luke xix. 41—44. It can be no adequate apology for those who deviate from the way of truth, to say, that they reasoned fairly, and acted consistently, according to their leading principles, when these were rashly adopted without proper examination.

2. *The mistakes and contradictions of much-esteemed writers, should excite us to cease from man, and implicitly follow Christ as our true light.* It is highly dangerous to yield the understanding and conscience to the dictation of any fallible creatures, on the ground of the superior fame which they have ob-

tained. There have been men of great fame in all sects, not excepting the most heterodox. The Jews had their famous elders, who took away the key of knowledge, and imposed on the simple with vain traditions. It was in consequence of their pernicious influence, that the general body of the common people, who had witnessed the beneficial miracles of Jesus, and admired his preaching, afterwards shamefully concurred in urging the Roman governor to crucify him. All who impose their private sentiments on others, or limit the right of free inquiry, deserve to be avoided as interested deceivers. Ignorant and erring mortals are kindly invited by Christ to follow him as the light of the world, John viii. 12. His word claims the utmost attention of all that have access to it; and every disciple is bound to receive its unsophisticated meaning, without being biased by the contradictory suggestions of men. The faithful ministers of the Gospel demand no implicit submission. They honour the Scripture as the only standard, and encourage their hearers to examine its proper import, and believe nothing without competent evidence. They preach not themselves, but Christ, as the only Lord of conscience, and count it their high honour to persuade others to hear, believe, and follow him.

3. *We are here furnished with an additional inducement to the study of the new covenant.* The investigation of the eternal counsels of the adorable Godhead, is altogether impracticable and hopeless. If the covenant in question had been a mutual contract formed between the Sacred Three, we might well have despaired of comprehending it; and all attempts to scrutinize its mysteries, would have been presumptuous; but it is actually made, in time, between God and his people. The precious contents of it are plainly stated, and capable of being understood by the most simple. Its privileges are exhibited to sinners for their conversion, and to saints for their edification and comfort. It nearly concerns the best interests of every class, and all may hope to profit by the study of it. If it be desirable to understand

the import of those writings which secure our temporal property, how much more desirable is it that we understand that covenant of God's making which secures the spiritual and everlasting felicity of all that believe! We have access to its benefits in common with others; we shall for ever enjoy them, if we do not exclude ourselves; therefore no subject has a stronger claim to our most careful researches.

5. *Let us seriously inquire whether God has established his covenant with us as individuls.* Many who hear it proclaimed, obstinately prefer the pleasures of this present world. A personal interest in it may be ascertained in a satisfactory manner, by the effects of the word. God reveals his covenant in the hearts of those with whom it is established, and disposes them to embrace it, as their inheritance and joy. Those who have experienced the teaching and drawing of the divine Spirit, who have felt their carnal prejudices brought down, and their minds reconciled to God, through the death of his Son, may conclude that he has made an everlasting covenant with them. Those who have hitherto neglected this subject, resisted the light of truth, trusted in their own goodness, and set their affections on earthly things, ought to conclude that they are strangers to the covenants of promise, far from God, destitute of his grace, and children of wrath.

6. *Let us make it our chief care to secure an abiding interest in this covenant, and to enjoy the seasonable accomplishment of its promises.* It will avail us nothing to understand its nature, if we do not live on it as the ground of our hope. The blessing of Abraham is now set before us through Jesus Christ, and God is calling us to become his people, and inherit his promises. Let us not judge ourselves unworthy of eternal life, nor despise benefits more precious than the whole world that we inhabit; but rather accept the gift of his boundless grace, and seek him while he may be found, lest he be provoked to swear in his wrath, that we shall not enter into his rest.

PART FOURTH.

OF THE MATTER OF THE NEW COVENANT.

Article 1st, HEBREWS VIII. 12. *For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more.*

THE Most High has declared, that his thoughts are far above man's thoughts. Had a number of the most ingenious men been employed to devise the most suitable articles of a covenant with God, they would have differed widely among themselves, and all their suggestions would have been at variance with the dictates of divine wisdom. We have already seen the propriety of looking beyond the most plausible human conjectures respecting the nature of the new covenant, and the parties between whom it is made. We proceed next, according to the general method proposed, to contemplate the important matter of which it consists.

On this part of the subject we are happily not left in any degree of uncertainty; nor is there any room for the indulgence of imagination. All the articles of this covenant are distinctly stated and unalterably fixed by the word of JEHOVAH. It would be presumption for mortals to add to them, or make any change. Our duty, therefore, will be to receive them as they are set before us, with humble reverence; and give diligence, by the aid of Scripture illustration, to ascertain their comprehensive import.

The words of the sure record, which now claim our attention, are these: "THIS IS THE COVENANT that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, *saith the* LORD, *I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts; and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people; and they shall not teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, know the Lord, for all shall*

know me from the least to the greatest. For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their transgressions will I remember no more." Ver. 10—12.

These most precious words contain *five distinct articles*, in the form of so many sure promises. The manner in which the last of them is introduced, shews that the divine mercy proclaimed in it, is the ground of all the rest. The Lord assigns the reason on account of which the most invaluable benefits of a positive kind are bestowed on sinners, by saying, "For I will be merciful," &c. We may therefore begin with this article, and proceed to consider them all in the following order. 1. "I will be merciful to their unrighteousness," &c. 2. "All shall know me." 3. "I will put my laws in their mind," &c. 4. "I will be to them a God." 5. "They shall be to me a people."

To attain a full and just view of the *first* of these articles in the order now proposed, let us contemplate,

First, The *nature* of the blessing which it exhibits.

Second, The *peculiar importance and value* of it.

I. Let us consider the precise *nature* of the blessing which is set before us in this article. In general, it denotes the pardon of sin; a blessing peculiarly adapted to the apprehensions and feelings of those who are convinced of their guilt, and impressed with the danger of being condemned to everlasting punishment. Such persons are pressed down with an insupportable burden; their first desire is to be delivered from it; and, till it be removed, and their fears quieted, they are incapable of enjoying the other benefits promised. This article of the covenant meets the necessity and the wishes of all those whose mouth is stopped by the law, as,

1. It contains a promise of *divine* pardon. The forgiveness of fellow-creatures is esteemed no small comfort to the guilty mind, especially when the party offended happens to be a person of high au-

thority, or superior worth, or one with whom the offender is nearly connected. The forgiveness of an aged and affectionate parent, is sweet to an undutiful but penitent child; and the pardon of an earthly sovereign is life from the dead, to a subject condemned for rebellion. The awakened conscience cannot, however, be satisfied with the pardon of any mere creature; because every transgression is an offence committed against God. He is a Being of infinite perfection—the supreme Lord of the universe, and all mankind are bound to honour him as their Creator, their Ruler, and their final Judge. His all-seeing eye beholds every violation of his law, though concealed from man in the secret chambers of the heart; no, no transgressor can possibly flee from his presence, or escape his dread tribunal. He is able to save the helpless, and to inflict lasting punishment beyond the grave. His favour is better than life, and his anger is more terrible than death. The hearts of all men are in his hand; and with the utmost ease he can raise up friends to the objects of his kindness, and restrain the wrath of their enemies. Till pardon be obtained from him, the good will of frail mortals is of little avail, and the most esteemed earthly comforts are liable to be turned into a curse; but reconciliation with him is the sure pledge of peace with his creatures, and the joy of the penitent soul. His cheering voice proclaims this invaluable blessing, saying, "I will be merciful to their unrighteousness. I, EVEN I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions, for mine own sake." Happy indeed are all those who can look to him with sure confidence, and say, "O Lord, I will praise thee; though thou wast angry with me thine anger is turned away, and thou comfortest me. Behold, God is my salvation: I will trust and not be afraid; for the LORD JEHOVAH is my strength and my song, he also is become my salvation." Isa. xliii. 25.; xii. 1, 2.

2. The *free unmerited* pardon of sin is here promised. God might have demanded many possible but difficult and burdensome performances, as ne-

cessary conditions in order to the forgiveness of sin. The guilty might have been required to seek divine pardon by giving up all their temporal substance, and reducing themselves to a state of abject poverty; by relinquishing the society of their beloved relatives, and accomplishing a pilgrimage to the most remote part of the globe; or by wasting their flesh with frequent fasting, and suffering the loss of their members by excruciating torture. They might likewise have been compelled to wait long in a state of painful uncertainty respecting the ultimate success of their labours and mortifications. Had such hard conditions been demanded, it would have been the duty and interest of the guilty to submit to them; and happy would that man have been to whom the pardon of sin was granted at the termination of a life of the greatest suffering and sorrow. But sinners are utterly incapable of meriting the divine favour by their most arduous services, or of making any compensation for their transgressions: therefore forgiveness is not tendered to them as the reward of their sincere endeavours to please God, but as the effect of pure mercy toward those who are justly denominated the ungodly, and even the enemies of the Most High. Hence, he says, "I will be merciful to their unrighteousness."

The pardon which God bestows, proceeds entirely from the intrinsic goodness of his nature, which surpasses human comprehension as far the heavens are higher than the earth. It is tendered to the guilty on the ground of an adequate atonement; but even the atonement was provided by God himself, as the greatest possible manifestation of his infinite love. It is granted to believing penitents; but repentance and faith are not the price which procures his favour, but the fruit of his undeserved sovereign grace, which effectually inclines those who were his enemies without cause, to be reconciled to him. Pardon is as freely bestowed as it is freely exhibited; nor is it withheld from men till the termination of a protracted course of reformation, active obedience, and patient suffering, but granted without delay to

all those who are made willing to accept of it according to the gospel plan. "The Lord is good and ready to forgive, and plenteous in mercy to all them that call upon him. He delighteth in mercy. Penitent sinners are justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: not for their sake, but his own name's sake."

3. A *complete* pardon is promised. This cheering truth is intimated by the variety of terms that are used in the words of the covenant. God has graciously engaged to forgive *unrighteousness*, and *sins*, and *transgressions* of every kind without exception, whether committed against his creatures, or more directly against himself, though numberless for multitude, and augmented by peculiar aggravations. He has undertaken to save his people from final condemnation, to turn away all his anger, to free them from all the humbling tokens of his former displeasure, to accept them as righteous before him, and admit them to the full enjoyment of his lasting friendship. To shew the complete and unreserved manner in which all their iniquities are pardoned, they are represented as covered from the eyes of JEHOVAH, blotted out as a thick cloud, cast behind his back, removed from them as far as the east is from the west, and buried in the depths of the sea," Rom. iv. 6, 7. Isa. xliv. 22.; xxxviii. 17. Ps. ciii. 12. Micah vii. 18, 19.

4. An *irrevocable and unalterable* pardon is promised. The sins of those who were under the old covenant, were brought to remembrance again every year, on the day of atonement, by sacrifices which had no efficacy to purge the conscience from guilt: but in the new covenant JEHOVAH says, "their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more." Those who have obtained the forgiveness of their old sins, are liable to be tempted, and occasionally drawn into evil during the remainder of their mortal life: "In many things we offend all. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." But when any of the heirs of promise offend, they have an Advocate with the

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brought them into existence. It provoked him to destroy the old world with a flood, and overthrow the cities of the plain with fire and brimstone. His wrath has been revealed against it, by all the numberless desolating prodigies, plagues, and wars, that have afflicted the world from the earliest ages. It is the true source of all the oppression, and the procuring cause of all the diversified miseries and tormenting fears under which the whole creation has groaned and travailed in pain since the beginning. Now, the blessing of divine pardon deserves to be valued and desired in proportion as the intrinsic evil of sin renders it hateful in the sight of God, and dangerous to those who are polluted with it.

2. We shall perceive the importance of pardon, if we reflect on the *multitude* of our sins. When the pious Psalmist contemplated the spotless purity and extensive demands of the divine law, he exclaimed, "Who can understand his errors?" If we deliberately try our heart and ways by that perfect law which we are under, we shall find abundant reason to conclude that our iniquities cannot be numbered. Let us seriously review the manifold sins of our youth, and of all the succeeding periods of our life, in their order, whether of omission or commission; let us attempt to recapitulate the particular instances in which we have failed in the performance of our duties towards God our Creator, Jesus Christ our Redeemer, the Holy Ghost, who is the sanctifier, our earthly superiors, our various relatives, our neighbours at large, and especially the children of God; let us next endeavour to enumerate all the sins of our tongues, our thoughts, our affections, and the faults of our religious performances, for only a single day, and we shall be convinced that they cannot all be reckoned up. After taking the most extensive view of our particular sins of which we are capable, we may then conclude that we have been chargeable with a still greater number which have been forgotten, or which we never discovered. How absolutely incalculable then, must the full amount of our transgressions be! None can num-

ber them, or set them in order before us, except the searcher of hearts, who is our constant witness and impartial Judge. Now, if the demerit of a single transgression be above human comprehension, how vast must the guilt of all our sins be, and how precious should we account the complete and irrevocable pardon of them!

3. We shall be convinced of the importance of pardon, if we reflect on the *aggravations* by which the enormity of our sins has been increased. It would perhaps be too much to affirm, that the demerit of particular sins is increased in geometrical proportion, according to the number of aggravating circumstances with which they are accompanied; but we are assured by the voice of unerring truth, that unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall much be required,—that it shall be more tolerable for the inhabitants of Sodom in the day of judgment, than for those who reject the gospel of Christ, —and that those sins are most criminal in the sight of God, which are committed in opposition to the greatest measure of spiritual light, and other religious advantages. Luke xii. 47. 48.; x. 12—16. John xv. 22—24.

Judging by these infallible rules, let us carefully examine in what degree our personal transgressions have been aggravated by the early parental instructions which we received; the constant access that we have had to the holy Scriptures, in their complete state and most legible form; the variety of religious books, and other helps for searching and understanding the Scriptures, which we have enjoyed; the many precious gospel sermons, and affectionate exhortations, that we have heard; the seasonable counsels and attracting examples of genuine christians, that have been set before us; the goodness and long-suffering of God, in bearing with us to bring us to repentance, though many of our early companions were suddenly cut off; the secret convictions of conscience, and gracious striving of the Spirit, that we have experienced; the prayers that we have offered, and the pious resolutions which we

have deliberately formed and too often violated; the numberless opportunities for receiving or doing good that we have irrecoverably lost, and the pernicious tendency of our offences, to endanger the chief interest of those who have been connected with us. These are only a few of the circumstances by which the enormity of particular sins may be heightened. Now, if we duly consider the intrinsic demerit of every sin as such, the countless multitude of our personal transgressions, and the variety of circumstances by which they have been aggravated before God, we shall see abundant reason to value the complete forgiveness of them, as more necessary and desirable, than all that the power of mortals can bestow.

4. The importance of pardon is evident from the *insupportable anguish of those who have an awakened conscience.* It must be admitted, that the frequent commission of wilful and presumptuous sin, stupifies the mind and hardens the heart. Hence some are so completely blinded, that they think God altogether of like dispositions with themselves, because he keeps silence, and allows them to prosper in the ways of evil. They make a mock of sin, and delight in it as a sweet morsel. Their conscience is callous, being seared with a hot iron. Till such persons be awakened from their dangerous lethargy, they are incapable properly to value the blessing of pardon. God sometimes touches the conscience of his guilty creatures, sets their transgressions before their eyes, reveals his righteous indignation against them, and deeply wounds their heart by his cutting reproofs. David knew the anguish of conviction, and faithfully described his sad experience of the terrors of the Almighty, and the sorrow which was thereby produced. His language on the subject is just and affecting: "When I kept silence, my bones waxed old; through my roaring all the day long. For day and night thy hand was heavy upon me: my moisture is turned into the drought of summer. Thine arrows stick fast in me, and thy hand presseth me sore. There is no soundness in my

flesh because of thine anger: neither is there any rest in my bones, because of my sin. For mine iniquities are gone over my head: as an heavy burden, they are too heavy for me. I am troubled, I am bowed down greatly; I go mourning all the day long." If David, who was a partaker of divine grace, found the torment of a guilty conscience so insupportable, who can wonder at the conduct of Judas the traitor, who violently destroyed himself, when his mind was overwhelmed by helpless remorse? Ps. xxxii. 3, 4.; xxxviii. 2—8.

Multitudes in every age have experienced similar distress of conscience, especially when exposed to danger, and in the near prospect of death. Have you never remarked the dejected appearance of those who were pricked to the heart by the preaching of the word, nor heard the dying lamentations of desponding hypocrites, on discovering that their harvest was past, their summer ended, and their souls not saved? Permit me rather to inquire, whether you have not *felt* the painful reproofs and forebodings of an upbraiding conscience, after the commission of some particular sin against its dictates? What were your apprehensions, in such cases, when you were left alone by your companions in a state of silence and darkness? Have you never been aroused by the searching reproofs and alarming threats of the Most High? Have the terrors of the hypocrite never beset you in the prospect of death and eternal judgment? If the remembrance of only a small portion of your guilt, has occasionally embittered the pleasures of life, cast a melancholy gloom over your terrestrial prospects, and rendered you a burden to yourself; what would your feelings of distress be, were God to set all your sins, with their numerous aggravations, in array before your face; and cause the poison of his arrows to drink up your spirit? If you properly knew the heavy burden of your guilt, you would then be prepared to understand the full import of what the psalmist uttered in similar circumstances: "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered."

5. The *final condemnation to which impenitent sinners are exposed*, shews the importance of pardon. God will not allow his irreconcilable enemies to abuse his long-suffering with lasting impunity. He has appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness, and manifest his infinite abhorrence of iniquity. Mankind shall be universally summoned before his great white throne. None of the impenitent shall be able to hide themselves in the grave, or in the caves of the earth, from the presence of their omnipotent Judge. All their wickedness shall be disclosed before the universe, without the possibility of concealment or disguise. They shall be openly convicted, filled with shame, and exposed to general abhorrence. All their defensive apologies shall be silenced; their importunate, but unseasonable, pleading for mercy shall be rejected, their fearful sentence of condemnation shall be pronounced, and their bitter lamentations and sorrows treated with unfeeling contempt. Suddenly shall they be banished from the blissful presence of God and the Lamb, to dwell with the devil and his angels in utter darkness and despair. Direful experience shall teach them the full import of the unmixed wrath of the Almighty, the gnawings of the worm which shall not die, and the torment of fire mingled with brimstone, that shall never be quenched! Writhing under the agony of continual pain, and destitute of one cheering ray of hope, they shall review with exquisite remorse the momentary pleasures of sin, and understand the value of pardon, which, in their condition, none can possibly attain. "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." Mortals cannot comprehend the power of his anger; but the striking language in which the final punishment of the wicked is revealed, should teach the guilty to prize the blessing of pardon, and accept of it while it is freely tendered.

6. The *impossibility of procuring pardon by the works of the law, or any sacrifice in the power of the guilty*, shews the importance and value of it. The heathen nations were early induced, by the painful conviction

of guilt, to devise various methods for appeasing the anger of God, procuring his forgiveness, and pacifying their consciences. Temples and altars were multiplied, thousands of costly victims were sacrificed, the most excruciating self-inflicted torments were patiently endured, and even the fruit of the body, in numberless instances, was offered to atone for the sin of the soul. If the multifarious rites of pagan superstition manifested the darkness of the human mind, and the inability of men to do or to devise any thing capable of recommending them to the divine favour, they may at least serve to evince the inestimable value of forgiveness, which felt necessity compelled the guilty to seek by such painful means.

God distinguished the Israelites by giving them a system of laws, wisely adapted to their condition as a nation. They were brought under strong obligations, and furnished with abundant encouragement to keep his commands: but his law was holy and spiritual; it demanded perfect and stedfast obedience, and as those who were under it, were depraved in heart, their defective, polluted righteousness, could not justify them. The slightest offence exposed the transgressor to the curse; therefore all who sought justification by their own works, were involved in condemnation. The law was weak through the corruption of the flesh. It was not given for the purpose of teaching sinners how to procure acceptance with God, but rather to convince and humble them, that his pardoning mercy might be rendered more precious in their estimation. The guilty were directed to offer sacrifices of various kinds for their transgressions, which were instituted as a temporary figure of good things to come; but as there could be no proportion between the disobedience of rational creatures, and the blood of animals that had no understanding, they were altogether inadequate of themselves to atone for the least offence; and those who offered them, thereby acknowledged that they were worthy of death, and exposed to punishment, from which nothing but the pardoning mercy of an

offended God could deliver them. Now, as those who feel the burden of their guilt, would gladly bestow any possible labour, and sacrifice all that they possess, even life itself, to obtain pardon; and as all their labours, offerings, and personal sufferings, are incapable of compensating for a single transgression, the complete forgiveness of all must be precious indeed. Rom. iii. 19—20. Heb. x. 1—4.

7. The *inestimable value of that perfect atonement*, through which alone pardon is exhibited and obtained, shews that it is highly important and desirable. Had God raised up only a mere creature, of an exalted order, far superior to mankind, to be offered as a sacrifice for their sins, the high rank of such a victim would have manifested the necessity and value of pardon. But an offering still more precious was requisite: therefore he took occasion, from the helpless condition of his fallen creatures, to display at once, and in the most striking manner, the boundless demerit of sin, the vast importance of forgiveness, and his own ineffable love, by sending his only begotten Son to be the propitiation. If we reflect on his dignity, as the perfect image and equal of the Father; his condescension in assuming the nature of man, and the likeness of sinful flesh; his humiliation in becoming a servant, and yielding obedience to the whole law; the deep abasement to which he submitted, and the exquisite sufferings which he endured; we shall know how to esteem the blessing of remission, which was procured by nothing less than his obedience, even to the death of the cross. He who had been addressed by the highest angels as the Creator and Lord of all, emptied himself and became poor; when rejected and persecuted by men, he offered up his prayers to God, with strong crying and tears: being exceeding sorrowful, and in an agony, his sweat was like great drops of blood falling to the earth; he became a curse, and poured out his soul, to redeem the guilty and helpless, that remission of sins might be freely proclaimed to them in his name. None can undervalue the blessing of pardon, without despising the person of Christ, and

pouring contempt on his precious blood, by which alone the guilty were redeemed from everlasting destruction: "Ye were not redeemed with silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish. For every priest standeth daily ministering, and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins; but this man, by one offering, hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified." 1 Pet. i. 18, 19.; Heb. x. 11—14.

8. The importance of divine pardon is evinced by *its inseparable connection with all other spiritual and heavenly blessings.* The pardon of an earthly sovereign, is highly valued by the trembling malefactor, because it saves him from an untimely, violent, and ignominious death; yet it confers no positive benefit. It leaves its object to the anguish of an upbraiding conscience, unprovided with the means of comfortable subsistence, the slave of evil passions, destitute of general confidence, and the ready victim of new and fatal temptations. The condition of those whom God pardons, is as far superior as his nature is greater and better than that of an earthly ruler. When he grants any of his guilty creatures the remission of their sins, he also admits them into a near relation to himself, as the members of his family, and renders them truly honourable in his household; he dwells with them, and manifests his favour to them, he enriches them with all spiritual benefits, and renews their whole nature by his grace, after his own image; he comforts them under their remaining afflictions, by his Holy Spirit, and preserves them from ever falling away from his favour; he makes them the heirs of his heavenly kingdom, and safely conducts them towards it. In addition to the forgiveness of their offences, they obtain an unalterable interest in the unsearchable riches of Christ, the unfading glories of paradise, the inexhaustible fulness of the Godhead, and all the other promises of the new covenant, which remain to be considered. "Being justified by his grace, they are made heirs according to the hope of eternal life." Titus iii. 7. Rom. v. 1—10, 21.

1*st*, *This subject should excite us to contemplate our personal need of pardon.* Let us minutely review the sins of all the successive stages of our life, with their peculiar aggravations, and impartially try our temper and practice by the perfect law, and the amiable example, of Jesus Christ. Let us anticipate the solemnities of death and judgment, and make the same fair estimate of our guilt before God, the terrors of his wrath, and the value of his favour, that we shall be constrained to do when the solemn realities of the unseen world are unvailed before our eyes. Until sinners begin to understand their need of pardon, they are incapable of relishing and enjoying the consolations of the gospel. Right apprehensions of personal guilt, and the value of remission, are highly conducive to the profitable application of the word of God, the life of faith in his Son, the possession of true comfort, and the practice of cheerful obedience.

2*d*, *Let us enquire whether we have actually obtained the pardon of our sins.* We may ascertain, during this life, whether we be in the gall of bitterness, or the happy partakers of divine mercy. The knowledge of our state before God is necessary and useful, calculated to awaken the slothful to flee from deserved punishment, and to fill the hearts of true penitents with peace, and hope, and love. Is it not wonderful that any who hear the gospel, can remain at ease in their minds, while in total uncertainty respecting their eternal interests? Do you feel willing to know, and to examine without delay, whether you be still under condemnation according to the law, or completely and irrevocably justified according to the gospel.—Then enquire, whether God has convinced you of sin, and given you repentance unto life. Has he revealed his Son in your heart, and effectually persuaded you to forsake all things for his sake, and to receive him by a living faith? Has he reconciled you to himself by the blood of Christ, taken away the prevailing love of this world, and attracted your unfeigned gratitude for his kindness? You may judge of your state by

your spiritual experience, and the prevailing tendency of your affections. There is no condemnation to them that are in Christ, who mortify their natural lusts, savour divine things, and walk according to the dictates of the Spirit; but those who are carnally minded, are yet in their sins.

3*d*, *Those who have hitherto lived in sin may obtain immediate pardon, through the blood of Christ.* Nothing can be more unwise or dangerous than to stifle conviction, or rest in doubtful tokens of a former conversion, for the sake of avoiding temporary uneasiness. Such is the excellence of the gospel, that it affords a sure foundation for the immediate confidence and peace of all that choose to embrace it. Whatever your state or your guilt be, you may this day enjoy divine pardon, and the cheering hope of eternal life. "Be it known to you, therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins; and by him all that believe are justified from all things from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses. Beware therefore, lest that come upon you which is spoken of in the prophets, Behold, ye despisers, and wonder, and perish!" Give full credit to the word of God concerning the work and worth of his Son; cordially accept his proclamation of mercy, and you shall never be confounded. Acts xiii. 38—41.

4*th*, *Those who have obtained the pardon of their sins ought daily to draw near to God with the lowliness of returning penitents.* When the prodigal came to his father, he said, "Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son." Luke xv. 17—21. The children of God ought to take heed of forgetting that they were sometime foolish, disobedient, enemies in their minds, and justly exposed to his wrath. Their confidence should never be allowed to degenerate into presumptuous familiarity or self-righteous pride. They ought never to imbibe the spirit, nor to imitate the example of the Pharisee, who boasted of his imaginary superiority, instead of bewailing his guilt, Luke xviii. 9—14. The blessed

who stand before the throne of God, clothed in white robes, and celebrate his praises, never forget that they were redeemed and washed from their sins by the blood of the Lamb. It would therefore be most unbecoming for imperfect creatures to lose sight of their former guilt and depravity. The particular confession of sin, with corresponding shame and self-abhorrence, ought to have a conspicuous place in all their devotional exercises, that the pardoning love of God may ever be sweet to them, and that their addresses may be acceptable in his sight.

5th, The Author of salvation demands our abiding gratitude for his pardoning mercy. Penitents abound in gratitude in proportion to the depth of their conviction and contrition. Until the burden of sin be felt, the joy of forgiveness cannot be known. Those who think lightly of their guilt, naturally despise the blessing of pardon. When the Lord speaks peace to the broken-hearted, they are filled with peace and joy, admiration and love. Our Redeemer manifested his high regard for such fervent affection, by what he said of the woman who washed his feet with tears: "Her sins which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little." Luke vii. 36—50.

As gratitude for pardoning mercy is peculiarly acceptable to God, it ought to be carefully cherished by christians through their whole life. Instead of allowing our first love to wax cold, as our tranquility of mind becomes established, let us stir up all that is within us to glorify the riches of divine grace, by frequently remembering our former convictions, our overwhelming fear of deserved wrath, our ardent desire of mercy on any terms, and our willingness to do any thing, or make any possible sacrifice, to obtain salvation at last. We should remember what deep and lasting gratitude we would have considered due to the Lord, in the time of our greatest spiritual distress, had he been pleased to grant us such manifestations of his favour then, as we have

enjoyed since. By frequently realizing our former apprehensions of guilt, and contemplating the way in which God reconciled us to himself, when we were enemies, by the death of his Son, our gratitude will be cherished, and we shall be prepared to adopt the language of the prophet: "Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage? he retaineth not his anger for ever, because he delighteth in mercy." Micah vii. 18.

6*th*, *Those who have obtained mercy from God, ought to abound in mercy and forgiveness towards their fellow creatures.* The pardoning love of God is revealed, to soften the hearts of his people, transform them after his image, and induce them to follow him, as dear children, by forgiving injuries, loving their enemies, and overcoming evil with good. As Jesus was hated and persecuted by the world, he taught his disciples to expect similar disaffection and tribulation for his sake; but instead of allowing them to indulge a spirit of revenge, he commanded them to forgive their enemies without reserve, and forewarned them of the fatal consequences of personal resentment. Those who pray for the forgiveness of their trespasses against God, without forgiving the injuries which they have received from men, do thereby contemn his mercy, insult his justice, and in effect call down his vengeance on themselves. Christians are under peculiar obligations to forgive the offences that they receive from each other, because God has forgiven all their iniquities, admitted them into his family as brethren, made them partakers of the same divine Spirit, shed abroad his love in their heart; and given them the prospect of dwelling together for ever in his kingdom, as his joint heirs. As we daily need to ask forgiveness from him, we should contrast the large amount of our sins against him, with the few and trivial injuries that we have received. We have no occasion to provide any atonement for the offences that we forgive, but he redeemed us by the blood of his Son. Let us therefore shew the sincerity of our gratitude for his

matchless kindness toward us, by putting away all bitterness, anger, and malice, and cordially imitating his tender mercy. Matt. vi. 14, 15.; xviii. 21—35. Eph. iv. 1, 2, 31, 32.

7th, Genuine penitents ought to abandon the practice and mortify the love of sin The prevailing love of sin is inconsistent with sincere repentance. Those who call on the Lord for his mercy, are commanded to forsake their evil ways, and banish their wicked thoughts. The same faith which justifies the ungodly, purifies their heart. The same manifestation of the love of God in redeeming and forgiving his enemies, which gives peace to the awakened conscience, shews the abominable nature of sin, makes it appear hateful, weakens the power of it, and renders the believer willing to be conformed to the Redeemer, by crucifying his lusts and becoming dead to sin. Let us therefore bring all our carnal affections, and the sins which have most easily beset us, to mount Calvary, and there, by faith, look unto Jesus bearing them in his body, that by his stripes we may be healed. While we behold the Lamb of God bearing our guilt, and redeeming us from everlasting sorrow, we shall be effectually excited to mourn for our iniquities, to hate them, and purify ourselves from the love of them, that we may live to his glory.

8th, Those who have obtained the pardon of their sins, ought patiently to endure all the afflictions of their temporal lot. Their sufferings during this life, are not worthy to be compared either with that endless and insupportable punishment which their iniquities deserved, or that unfading weight of glory which God has prepared for them. They are all intended to promote their best interests, by bringing their sins to remembrance, weaning their affections from earthly things, sweetening the divine promises, conforming them to their Saviour, and preparing them for the more exquisite enjoyment of everlasting felicity. It is far better to be chastened by a wise and compassionate Father, than to be condemned by a righteous inexorable judge. Those who are tormented without

intermission with fire and brimstone, where one drop of water cannot be obtained, would gladly accept the present lot of the most afflicted believer on earth, and think their sufferings light. Let us take occasion from our earthly troubles, to consider how much greater our sufferings might justly have been, and to acknowledge that it is of the Lord's mercy that we are not consumed. Let us contemplate the shame and anguish that Christ endured in our stead, and willingly bear his dying in our body, that his life may be made manifest in us at last. If we endure the chastening of our heavenly Father with a filial spirit, he will make us partakers of his holiness, exalt us to his celestial rest, and wipe away all tears from our eyes.

PART FOURTH

CONTINUED.

OF THE MATTER OF THE NEW COVENANT.

Article 2d, HEBREWS VIII. 11. *They shall not teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for all shall know me from the least to the greatest.*

THE new covenant is well ordered in all things. It comprehends not only the pardon of sin and deliverance from condemnation, but also such blessings of a positive kind as are necessary and sufficient to render those who have an interest in them, perfect and happy. Having already considered the former, the latter now claims our attention.

The words before us contain a promise of knowledge of the most excellent kind, with respect to both its Author and its object. The languages and customs, kingdoms and revolutions, sciences and inventions of mankind, are all in some degree interesting, and worthy of a share of regard correspond-

ing with their importance: but God is infinitely superior to all other objects, the knowledge of him is indispensably necessary, and in the highest degree beneficial. An acquaintance with earthly things may be acquired by observation, and the discoveries of science may be communicated to persons of adequate capacity, by skilful teachers: but none can attain proper apprehensions of the unseen God, except those who are taught of God. Therefore, he has said, "All shall know me." The knowledge which he imparts to all who are in covenant with him, is of the greatest practical utility. It enlarges the capacity of their minds, purifies and elevates their affections, advances them to the enjoyment of delightful communion with himself, and fits them for his service. It is the beginning, and the sure pledge of the everlasting light of the New Jerusalem.

To obtain proper views of the new covenant, let us enquire,

First, What knowledge God has promised to communicate.

Second, In what manner it is imparted.

Third, To what extent he has undertaken to bestow it.

I. Let us enquire what knowledge God has promised to communicate.

1. He has promised to make his people know *what he is in himself, in distinction from all other gods.* The light of reason teaches men that there is a God, a being of more than human power and dominion; but their unaided researches are incapable of discovering in a satisfactory manner *what* God is. The Gentiles were early led astray by a vain imagination. They changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into images made like to corruptible man, and to birds and beasts. Their idols were multiplied without end; but all detestable in character, and contemptible for their insignificance. Strange and unaccountable as the blindness of the ancient Israelites may now appear to us, it was matter of controversy in the days of the prophet Elijah, whether they

should acknowledge JEHOVAH or Baal as their God. To produce a deep and lasting conviction in their minds, that the Lord was the only true God, he sent down fire from heaven to consume the sacrifice, and the altar on which his servant had offered it, and afterward delivered the Syrian army repeatedly into their hands, 1 Kings xviii. 21—39.; xx. 13—38. Notwithstanding all the wonders that God had performed for his ancient people from the days of Moses, they frequently forsook him and worshipped the idols of the heathen, or vainly attempted to serve both in conjunction. Their faith had been so wavering and unsettled till the time when they were delivered into the hands of the Chaldeans, that, when the prophet Ezekiel was sent to instruct and comfort the captives, it was declared that they should be made to know JEHOVAH as the only true God. Such was the importance of the promise, in connection with the necessity of the people to whom it was addressed, that he was directed to repeat it in his writings above forty times.

The Lord has promised to make his people know, not only *who* he is, in distinction from all false gods, but *what* he is in his adorable perfections and character, as the infinite ONE, whose existence is independent and self-sufficient, from everlasting to everlasting, without succession of days, or the possibility of change. He will manifest his wonderful immensity, which is ever present with them, and with all his creatures, and which the heaven of heavens cannot contain; his boundless knowledge, which extends to all things whether past, present, or future, from the greatest to the most minute; his unerring wisdom, which directs all his counsels and operations in a way past all finding out; his almighty power, which accomplishes all his purposes irresistibly and incessantly, without fainting or becoming weary; his glorious majesty, greatness, and dominion over all his creatures in heaven and earth; his spotless purity, as the thrice holy God, in whose eyes the very heavens are not clean; the inflexibility of his justice in rendering to his accountable creatures according to their works, without conniving at guilt, or suffering the

righteous to perish; and his veracity and faithfulness in declaring the truth in unmixed purity, and performing his words to all generations. He will make them to comprehend his abundant goodness in producing numberless creatures capable of happiness, and liberally furnishing them with the means of attaining it; his patience and long-suffering in delaying the punishment of transgressors, and allowing them space for repentance; his tender mercy, rich grace, and ineffable love, in delivering the distressed, and saving his people from their sins in a manner calculated to raise their felicity to the highest conceivable pitch, and display the glory of all his attributes.

Those who are not spiritually taught of God, misrepresent and limit his perfections. Notwithstanding the outward light of his word, they form inconsistent unworthy apprehensions of his character, as if his thoughts were similar to their own; but he makes his own people to know his matchless excellence, and think of him with profound veneration, as a Being far exalted above all created understanding and praise. 2 Cor. iv. 6.

2. God has promised to make his people know *what he is to them, in distinction from the rest of mankind.* He is the Creator and Preserver, the Sovereign and Judge of the whole human race; but the wicked are represented as afar off from him. They have forsaken the fountain of living waters, and hewed out for themselves broken cisterns. Their heart is alienated from him, and inordinately attached to inferior objects. They practically forget God, and live without him in the world; or if they do occasionally think of him, it is with dread and aversion. "They say unto God, Depart from us; for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways." The Lord is far from them, nor do they derive any delight from their connexion with him as his accountable creatures.

The children of promise are all sought out and not forsaken. They are brought back from their wandering, cordially reconciled to God, accepted of him, and admitted into a new relation to him, which

is near, honourable, and unalterable. They obtain a personal interest in him as their own God, their Saviour, their heavenly Father, and everlasting portion. Now the Lord has promised to shew his people that his anger is turned away from them, that he is fully pacified towards them, that he has become their own in the most endearing relations, and that his love to them shall never decay. His gracious words are, "I will give them a heart to know me, that I am the Lord, and they shall be my people, and I will be their God. Thou shalt know that I the Lord am thy Saviour, and thy Redeemer, the Mighty One of Jacob. At that day ye shall know, that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you." Being thus taught from above, they have good ground for saying, "We have known and believed the love that God hath to us." And we are persuaded that nothing "shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." Jer. xxiv. 7. Isa. lx. 16. John xiv. 20. 1 John iv. 16.

3. The Lord has promised to make his people know the *peculiar way in which he becomes their God.* The way of salvation was contrived by him before the foundation of the world, and his gracious design was early intimated after the entrance of sin. Its accomplishment was long prefigured by the ordinances of the law, and foretold by the preaching and writings of the prophets. When the fulness of the time arrived, all these ancient promises, figgures, and predictions, were amply verified by the Son of God, manifested in human flesh. He proclaimed divine pardon and peace to the guilty, offered himself a sacrifice for their redemption, and commanded his apostles to publish the glad tidings of salvation to sinners of every land, with assurance that those who believe in him shall not perish, but have eternal life.

Such is the natural blindness of the carnal mind, that no clearness of outward instruction, can make sinners to perceive their need of salvation, or to understand its excellence and suitableness, or com-

prehend the wisdom of the plan according to which it is bestowed. "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." Hence the hearers of Jesus murmured against him, contradicted his doctrine, and rejected his heavenly message with disgust. When the apostles preached the doctrine of his cross, as the power of God unto salvation, those who possessed only the wisdom of this world, despised it as foolishness.

That the way of reconciliation with God might not be published without effect, he promised to teach his chosen in an internal and efficacious manner, by convincing them of sin, righteousness, and judgment, and thereby persuading them to receive his word of grace as the foundation of their hope. "It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. In that day shall the deaf hear the words of the book, and the eyes of the blind shall see out of obscurity, and out of darkness; they also that erred in spirit shall come to understanding." John vi. 45. Isa. xxxv. 5.; xxix. 18, 24.

The heirs of these and similar promises are made to understand the mysteries of divine wisdom and love in the method of salvation, to perceive its excellence, and feel its suitableness to their helpless condition. They can affirm without presumption, that the Son of God has given them an understanding heart, to know him that is true, and comprehend the dimensions of his love, which surpasses all natural knowledge.

4. God has promised to make his people know his *ultimate design* in bringing them into a peculiar relation to himself. The glory of God is the chief end of all his works, and the highest and most worthy object that can be conceived: "For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things; to whom be glory for ever. Amen." This holds

true in a special manner respecting the salvation of his people. It originated in his sovereign love; it was procured by the humiliation of his only Son; it is effectually applied by his Holy Spirit; and the design of the whole is, to shew the exceeding riches of his grace, so as thereby to humble them for their iniquities, subdue their natural enmity, reconcile them to himself, attract their supreme affection, and engage them to live to his praise. Accordingly he said, "Behold, I will do a new thing, now it shall spring forth; shall ye not know it? I will even make a way in the wilderness, and rivers in the desert. The beasts of the field shall honour me, the dragons and the owls; because I gave waters in the wilderness and rivers in the desert. This people have I formed for myself; they shall shew forth my praise." Isa. xliii. 19—21.

Agreeably to these words, we are informed, that God elected his people, and predestinated them to the adoption of children before the world began, and that they are quickened together with Christ, accepted through his blood, and blessed with all spiritual blessings in him, to the praise of his glorious grace; or, that he might shew in them the exceeding riches of his grace, and thereby bring them under the strongest obligations to glorify his name. When they are brought out of darkness into his marvellous light, they not only understand and acknowledge their peculiar obligations, but cordially acquiesce in the design of redeeming love as their chief end and delight. Eph. i. 3—8.; ii. 4—7. 1 Peter ii. 9.

II. Let us now inquire in what *manner* the knowledge of God is imparted to his people.

1. God causes his people to know him by the *observation of his works* of creation and providence. All his works praise him, by manifesting his independent existence as the first cause, his wisdom in contriving, his power in creating all things, his goodness in imparting happiness, and his supreme

dominion as the only sovereign of the universe. "The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament sheweth his handy-work. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge." The pious Psalmist delighted to meditate on these objects, and celebrate the praises of their incomprehensible Author. The attention of men is frequently called to the daily operations of God in preserving all things, providing seasonable supplies for his numberless creatures, relieving the distressed, punishing the impenitent, and delivering them that fear him. The works of creation and common providence cannot, of themselves, furnish satisfactory information respecting the salvation of sinners; but they ought not, on that account, to be slighted or neglected; because the attentive study of them is calculated to free the mind from the prejudices of blind superstition, and prepare it for entertaining more enlarged apprehensions of the infinite greatness of God, and for admiring his condescension and love toward men, both in their original and fallen state. The great practical importance of that knowledge of himself which he imparts to his people, by the observation of his visible works, may be estimated from such passages as, Ps. viii. xix. civ. cvii. Job xxxviii. to xli. Isa. xl. 12—29.

2. God causes his people to know him, by the *declarations of his word.* It is in his word that he has proclaimed the glories of his name in the most explicit manner, and disclosed the most important secrets respecting his being and purposes. The knowledge which it conveys is clear, certain, and striking, far surpassing that which may be derived from the contemplation of his outward works. It imparts the most satisfactory information concerning the unity of his nature, the perfection of his character, and the equity of his government. It is wisely adapted to the present condition of mankind, as fallen polluted creatures. It shews the righteous indignation of the Almighty against sin, and the only way in which they may be restored to his favour. It discovers the three distinct subsistents,

or persons of the Godhead, all concurring in the contrivance, purchase, and application of redemption. By it the words of eternal life are addressed to sinners of every station, capacity, and character; and the most simple may understand its instructions, which are able to make them wise to salvation, through faith in Christ. The suitableness and efficacy of the word of truth, as the means of divine knowledge, are frequently and devoutly celebrated. Ps. xix. 7—11.; cxix. 2 Tim. iii. 14—17.

3. The people of God attain the true knowledge of him by *the contemplation of his image.* The natural attachment of mankind to sensible objects is so powerful, that a desire to have some visible representation of the Divine Being, has been almost universally prevalent. The unenlightened heathen, from the most savage to the most refined, have openly addicted themselves to the use of images in their religious worship; and a criminal propensity to imitate their example, too often appeared among the ancient Israelites, in direct opposition to the law of Moses. The religious use of all images framed by the device of man, is highly offensive to God, and prejudicial to the soul; but in much condescension to the weakness of his people, he has been pleased to furnish them with one perfect image of himself, calculated at once to increase their knowledge, improve their hearts, and animate their devotion. This image is the Lord Jesus Christ: "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him; who is the image of the invisible God; the brightness of his glory, and the express character of his person." John i. 14, 18. Col. i. 15. Heb. i. 3.

When he tabernacled upon earth, the glory of the divine wisdom and power, righteousness and truth, goodness and long-suffering, mercy and grace, condescension and love, was clearly displayed by his amiable temper and perfect example—the astonishing miracles which he performed—the victories which he achieved over the prince of darkness—the inimitable kindness with which he attracted lost

sinners, and the invaluable benefits which he conferred on them who received him. He said, "If ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also." When the apostle Philip said, "Lord, shew us the Father, and it sufficeth us;" he replied, "Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not not known me, Philip? he that hath seen me, hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Shew us the Father?" John xiv. 7—9. "In him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily." The attributes of the Divine nature, and the wonderful manner in which it subsists in three distinct persons, are manifested in the most illustrious and striking way by his mediation. This perfect image of God is still exhibited to men: it may be perceived by the light of the gospel; and by the contemplation of it, his people behold his glory, much more clearly than the great prophet of Israel did when he saw his back-parts, and heard the proclamation of his name. Exod. xxxiii. 18—23.

4. God enables his people to know him, by the *illumination of his Spirit.* The light of the gospel shines into darkness; but carnal men do not comprehend it, because their minds are blinded by the influence of Satan, the power of prejudice, and prevailing disaffection to the truth. To remove the natural darkness of his people, God sends down his Holy Spirit, and thereby opens their understanding, shines into their hearts, arrests their attention, and enables them to behold his glory in Christ with unvailed face. 2 Cor. iv. 3, 4.; iii. 18.

The immediate inspiration and miraculous gifts of the Holy Ghost, were peculiar to the apostles and other primitive followers of Jesus; but his illuminating influence is granted to all the saints in common, as the anointing which abideth in them; for "if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his." Hence our Apostle prayed in behalf of believers in general, and taught them to pray for themselves, that the eyes of their understanding might be enlightened with the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of God, and the bound-

less extent of his love through Jesus Christ. 1 John ii. 20, 27. Eph. i. 17, 18.; iii. 14—19.

5. God causes his people to know him, by the *participation of his goodness.* Useful knowledge may be derived from various sources: but that which is most experimental, is justly accounted most certain and satisfactory. The knowledge which God has promised to bestow on his people, is of this superior kind. He has undertaken to dwell in them, and manifest himself to them in another manner than he doth to the world. He causes them to taste that he is good, refreshes them with his divine fulness, and thereby makes them to comprehend his love. He sheds abroad his love in their hearts, fills them with joy and peace, gives them the earnest of the heavenly inheritance, and cheers them with the sure hope of for ever drinking of the river of pleasure at his right hand. They know his kindness, not only by the infinite price with which he redeemed them from all iniquity, but by his quickening power, which raised them when they were dead in sin, his special presence in their heart, the filial access to his throne of grace with which which they are daily honoured, and the seasonable communications of spiritual strength and consolation with which they are furnished in answer to their prayers. John xiv. 20—23. Rom. v. 5.

III. Let us now enquire, to what *extent* God has promised to bestow the knowledge of himself.

1. The knowledge of God is imparted to *all his spiritual Israel*, who are the heirs of promise. As it is peculiar to them, and enjoyed by none else, so it is granted to them all, without any exception, though in various degrees. Some are comparatively unskillful in the word of righteousness, being only babes in Christ; others are in the more advanced state of young men, and even fathers, having their senses exercised to discern both good and evil: but they are all enlightened in the knowledge of the true God, and the way of acceptance with him through his Son. By this they are happily distinguished from the generality of the ancient Israelites,

who saw the mighty works of the Lord, and yet did not understand his wonders, nor perceive the matchless excellence of his character. "Moses called unto all Israel, and said unto them, Ye have seen all that the Lord did before your eyes in the land of Egypt, unto Pharaoh, and unto all his servants, and unto all his land; yet the Lord hath not given you an heart to perceive, nor eyes to see, and ears to hear unto this day." Deut. xxix. 2, 4. The old covenant did not communicate the true knowledge of God to those who heard it proclaimed to them with his own voice from mount Sinai, and witnessed the daily effects of his miraculous power by which they were sustained for many years in the wilderness; and hence they understood not his wonders.

The far greater number of the heirs of the new covenant, never had an opportunity of witnessing the performance of a single miracle, or immediate divine manifestation; and they differ greatly from one another in their temporal station, their natural talents, degree of intellectual cultivation, and access to outward religious instruction: yet they are all furnished with that knowledge of God which is life eternal: "All thy children shall be taught of the Lord;" for he has said, "They shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them."

2. The knowledge which God has promised to impart to his people, *excels all that can be communicated by the teaching of man.* Being bestowed by God himself, it is distinguished from such knowledge as fellow-creatures have it in their power to impart. Hence, it is said, "They shall not teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord." This is not to be viewed as a prohibition of human teaching, or an intimation that it ought to be discontinued as vain and unprofitable; for it is by the instrumentality of his word, that he enlightens the mind. He has appointed pastors and teachers to instruct his people, and commanded them to attend on the preaching of his word in public, and also to teach and edify one another in private. The strong language of our text was intended to shew, that something far superior

to the best instruction that men can afford, is to be granted by the Father of lights to his own family. This view of the promise agrees with the following consolatory declaration of Christ: "At that day ye shall ask in my name; and I say not unto you that that I will pray the Father for you, for the Father himself loveth you." John xvi. 26, 27. Jesus did not intend to decline making intercession with the Father in behalf of his disciples, for he had repeatedly promised so to do in the former part of his address. His design evidently was to furnish additional consolation, by giving them assurance of the peculiar love of God the Father toward them. In like manner, God did not intend to set aside his own ordinance of mutual teaching, as unnecessary, but to shew his people that his own teaching was to be added to theirs, as every way superior. Men can address the outward ear only: he has undertaken to enlighten the understanding. It is the duty of teachers to persuade and reason, but it is the prerogative of God to soften and open the heart for the reception of his truth. The ancient Israelites had long resisted the preaching of the prophets; therefore the Lord engaged to teach his own spiritual Israel in a more effectual manner, by removing the vail of natural blindness, and shining into their mind.

3. That knowledge which God has promised to impart to his people, is sufficient as the *ground and principle of true faith.* "Without faith it is impossible to please him; for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is the rewarder of them that diligently seek him." That faith which he requires, does not consist in believing the testimony or the opinions of men, on the ground of any human authority; but in believing the word of God in its proper meaning, on the ground of his unchangeable veracity and faithfulness. None can believe God without knowing that it is God who addresses them, and understanding the import of what he speaks. The Jews boasted that they were the disciples of Moses; yet Jesus informed them

that they had not believed him, because they had never understood the sentiments contained in his writings.

The true knowledge of God is the immediate principle of faith. Hence, it is said, "They that know thy name will put their trust in thee." The children of God are enabled to distinguish between his word and that of man, to know that he speaks to them, and comprehend the import of his message. His promise secures this: "Therefore my people shall know my name; therefore they shall know in that day, that I am he that doth speak; behold, it is I." Isa. lii. 6. By the divine teaching that they enjoy, they are all effectually drawn to Christ as their Saviour. They know his voice as their good Shepherd, and therefore they follow him in preference to all strangers. When the word of faith is brought home to their hearts by the Holy Ghost, they receive it with much assurance that it is not the voice of man, but of God. John vi. 44, 45.; x. 4. 14.

4. That knowledge which God has promised to his people, *effectually transforms their souls into his image.* The divine image is the highest beauty of which human nature is capable. Our first parents were adorned with it when they were created; but by yielding to temptation they soon lost their glory. It is the will of God, that his holy image which was defaced by the fall, shall be restored to his chosen, who are advanced from a state of ruin to an honourable place in his family. This restoration is gradually accomplished by the light of his truth, which shines into them, in like manner as the face of Moses was made to shine by the splendour of the divine glory which he beheld in the mount. In proportion as God imparts right apprehensions of himself to the minds of his people, their prejudices are removed, and their hearts are reconciled to him: they become more and more pleased with his character, works, and will; they love him, and desire to please him; they approve what he approves, and dislike what he forbids and condemns. They are

progressively assimilated to him in their thoughts and dispositions, tempers and conduct. As all genuine renovation of heart and practice, is the proper effect of the knowledge of God, Jesus prayed that his disciples might be sanctified by the truth. They are represented as having put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of the Creator. They are assimilated to the God of love, by knowing and believing his love manifested through his Son. The Holy Spirit enables them to behold the glory of the Lord, and thereby changes them into the same image from glory to glory. Col. iii. 10. 1 John iv. 7—19. 2 Cor. iii. 18.

5. The knowledge which God has promised, *yields true satisfaction and delight* to them who are made partakers of it. Religion demands the chief care and the deepest concern of mankind. Those who are imposed upon with a false religion, cannot possibly attain the satisfaction of perceiving by competent evidence that their hope is founded on a rock which will never fail nor disappoint them. They are constantly exposed to the annoyance of doubts, fears, and misgivings of heart. Those on the contrary, who are taught of God, and renewed after his image, know that they are of the truth, and their former anxiety in the prospect of eternal judgment, is thereby brought to rest. 1 John iii. 19, 24. The divine teaching not only satisfies the mind on the most important subject, by the solid assurance which it produces, but it yields a high degree of delight by the peculiar excellence of the objects of contemplation which it presents to it: "Truly the light is sweet, and a pleasant thing it is for the eyes to behold the sun." If the natural light be sweet to them that have been long shut up in darkness, the marvellous light of divine knowledge must be far superior. The devout Psalmist thirsted for the living God, and desired above all things to behold his uncreated beauty. When he saw the glory and enjoyed the love of God, his heart was satisfied as with marrow and fatness. The celestial felicity of the blessed will consist in seeing him without re-

straint or interruption; and in proportion as he is pleased to manifest himself to his children upon earth, and shed abroad his love in their hearts, they enjoy the delightful foretaste of heaven.

The extent of this knowledge may be estimated by the magnitude of its object, and the variety of beneficial effects which it produces, not only on christians whose minds have been highly cultivated and furnished with much human learning, but on multitudes who had nothing else to raise them from a state of almost savage ignorance and rudeness. It may be despised as foolishness by conceited worldlings, who are unacquainted with its excellence; yet it is of a higher nature, and far more advantageous to those who are made partakers of it, than all the boasted discoveries of earthly science. It effectually secures their eternal interest, prepares them for the faithful discharge of their duties to both God and man, supports them under the troubles of their lot, makes them meet for joining the glorious assembly of saints and angels before the celestial throne, and enables them to attain the chief end of their being as intelligent creatures.

6. The knowledge of himself which God has promised to his people, *shall eternally flourish in perfection.* The light of divine truth is communicated in a gradual progressive manner, like the natural light which encreases from the early dawn till the sun appear in his dazzling splendour. The disciples of Christ understand much more concerning God and the unseen world, than the ancient patriarchs and prophets did; yet their knowledge is still very limited and confused. Of many things highly important, they feel themselves entirely ignorant; and in too many cases their sentiments are erroneous and self-contradictory. They see spiritual objects as in a mirror, enigma, or riddle. Even the great Apostle of the Gentiles understood only in part, and compared his acquirements in knowledge, to the obscure and incongruous conceptions of childhood, which the man of ripe age puts away. By searching the Scriptures, and comparing spiritual things

with spiritual, the people of God have made considerable progress in knowledge since the close of the dark ages, and they believe that much precious truth remains to be discovered. During the millennial reign of Christ and his saints, the knowledge of God and his works will be greatly increased, and widely diffused among the nations. We have assurance, that "the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea. Moreover, the light of the moon shall be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun shall be sevenfold, as the light of seven days." As if this strong figurative language were still inadequate to set forth the splendour of the happy period referred to, it is said, "The sun shall be no more thy light by day, neither for brightness shall the moon give light unto thee; but the Lord shall be unto thee an everlasting light, and thy God thy glory. Thy sun shall no more go down, neither shall thy moon withdraw itself: for the Lord shall be thine everlasting light, and the days of thy mourning shall be ended." Isa. xi. 9.; xxx. 26.; lx. 19, 20.

The knowledge of the godly during the millennium will no doubt very far exceed all former discoveries of the word and works of God; but these and many similar promises will receive their ultimate and complete accomplishment in the eternal world, when the glorified inhabitants of the New Jerusalem shall no more have occasion to teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord; for they shall all be present with the exalted Redeemer to behold his uncreated glory. Then shall they "see him as he is, face to face, and know even as they are known." The Lord God and the Lamb, shall be their immediate and eternal light. They shall advance without restraint and without end in the knowledge of the adorable attributes, extensive operations, and unalterable counsels of the Most High, and participate of the river that flows from his right hand for evermore. John xvii. 24. 1 Cor. xiii. 9—12. Rev. xxi. 22—24.; xxii. 3—5.

1*st*, From this subject we may conclude, that

the teaching which God has promised in the new covenant, is indispensably necessary to the enjoyment of his favour and salvation. It is obvious that none can trust in God, nor love him, nor find delight in his service, except those who know his nature and will. The natural darkness of the human mind is such, that none can enlighten it except he who made it. The best outward advantages and means of instruction, cannot possibly open the understanding, nor overcome the resistance of the carnal heart, which is alienated from God through ignorance, and positively disaffected to the light of truth. The hearers of Moses and the prophets, and even those who were addressed in the most affectionate persuasive manner by Christ and his apostles, misunderstood and perverted their words, or openly rejected them, and turned away their ears with disgust. None ever derived the true knowledge of Christ and his salvation from flesh and blood, but only from the effectual teaching of the Father, by the influence of his Holy Spirit.

2*d*, *The conviction of our natural blindness to the things of God, ought to humble us in his presence, and deter us from trusting in our own understanding.* Self-conceit is altogether vain and delusive, equally inconsistent with dependance on that wisdom which comes down from above, and with the humility and candour which are favourable to the discovery of truth. It is evident that mankind err from the truth, as widely as they differ from each other, and from the word of the Lord; and none of them err more fatally, than those who are wise in their own eyes: "If any man think that he knoweth any thing, he knoweth nothing yet, as he ought to know." Those who have been most enlightened with spiritual wisdom, have abounded in lowly self-diffidence. Let us therefore maintain a godly jealousy over the natural pride of our understanding, and become fools in our own estimation, that we may be made wise indeed. Prov. xxx. 2—4.; iii. 5—7. 1 Cor. iii. 18—20.

3*d*, *The light of divine knowledge is one of the first*

and best blessings which God bestows on his chosen; therefore, those who have not been made to behold his glory in Christ, can have no present interest in the other benefits of the new covenant. We have already seen, that its saving privileges are so inseparably connected, that no one of them can be enjoyed without all the rest. As the natural light was one of the first things which God produced in the old creation, spiritual light is one of the first things which he imparts to those whom he creates anew in Christ Jesus; and its entrance into the soul, is the sure pledge and medium of all those heavenly and enduring benefits which follow. He shines into the hearts of sinners by his word and Spirit, and thereby enables them to behold his glory in the face of his Son, to apprehend him with faith unfeigned, to become his living members, to love him supremely, and serve him in newness of life: but those in whom spiritual darkness prevails, are still dead in sin, alienated from the life of God, the children of wrath, and subject to condemnation.

4th, This should excite us to enquire, whether the Lord has given us an understanding heart to know him. Permit me to ask, if you have discovered your natural darkness and disaffection to the light of truth, and experienced a gracious change? Can you say, "One thing I know, that whereas I was blind, now I see?" Have your eyes been opened to perceive the superlative worth of Christ, and has the discovery rendered you willing to count all things loss for the excellency of his knowledge, that you might win him? Have you found rest to your conscience and your heart in Christ, in preference to your own righteousness and the vanities of this world? Do you cleave to him in heart, with ardent and steadfast affection? Has the knowledge of God which you have received, reconciled you to his character and will? Do you abhor yourself for your former blindness, and unreasonable enmity against him, and desire above all things to have his image completely restored within you, to walk before him in holiness, and enjoy his celestial presence? That

light which God imparts to his people, changes their taste and disposition; it raises their affections from low and grovelling objects, makes them to savour the things of the Spirit, to live as strangers on the earth, and prepare for dwelling in the heavenly Zion: but those who profess to know God, while they live under the influence of worldly lusts and malicious tempers, are pronounced self-deceivers and liars. 1 John ii. 3—6.; iii. 6—10; iv. 6—8.

5th, Let us all look to Jesus Christ, and steadfastly follow him, that we may abound in the knowledge of his heavenly Father. He is now addressing us, as he once addressed the Jews, in the following gracious words: "I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life. Yet a little while is the light with you: walk while ye have the light, lest darkness come upon you. While ye have the light, believe in the light, that ye may be the children of light." John viii. 12.; xii. 35, 36. His first disciples beheld his glory as the only begotten of the Father; and what they saw and heard of him, they faithfully recorded for the benefit of succeeding generations. It is vain and criminal to expect the communication of divine knowledge by any sudden miraculous impulse, while the appointed means are neglected. Wild enthusiasm must be avoided, as equally dangerous with presumptuous self-confidence. Those who feel their need of the divine teaching, are not directed to wait for the supernatural illumination of the Spirit in the indulgence of carnal sloth, but to search the Scriptures which testify of Christ; to contemplate the clear account which they give of his person and offices, humiliation and exaltation, precious benefits and abounding grace; to believe in him and learn of him; to pray for the Spirit of wisdom which he has promised, and cherish his enlightening influence, by resolutely coming to the light of truth, and receiving it into their heart.

6th, To conclude, *let us make a daily and practical use of that measure of knowledge which we have received, in the cheering hope of progressive and ever-*

lasting light. The great things of God are not made known to mankind for the purpose of barren speculation, nor to elate their minds with intellectual pride; but to promote holiness of heart and life; to raise them from the ruins of their fallen state, assimilate them to the divine nature in their thoughts and dispositions, and prepare them for relishing the entertainments, and taking part in the worship, of heaven. Few things are more to be lamented than the humbling difference which too often appears between the good principles and the practice of men, or the little influence that the former have on the latter. How many important truths are admitted in theory, but practically forgotten, or at least not applied to the mind for the sanctification of its affections, and the government of its tempers? None can pray for the Spirit of illumination in a sincere or acceptable manner, except those who hold fast the truth which they have received, and act according to the influence of it. When men hold it in unrighteousness, by violating its dictates, while they ask increase of knowledge, they become guilty of mocking the Hearer of prayer, and quenching his Spirit. Those who abide in Christ, are commanded to honour his name, by putting off the works of darkness, and walking as the children of the light. In proportion as believers are purified and transformed by the truth which God has revealed in them, their delight in his service will be increased, and their hope of everlasting light and glory confirmed. Eph. iv. 17—24.; v. 8—16.

PART FOURTH

CONTINUED.

OF THE MATTER OF THE NEW COVENANT.

Article 3d. HEBREWS VIII. 10. *I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts.*

THE inward depravity of mankind, while in their natural state, is so gross, that many misrepresent the divine law, and flatter themselves in their own eyes that they are righteous, notwithstanding the daily indulgence of their carnal affections; and even when the defects of their practice are too palpable to admit of being denied, they frequently maintain that their heart is good, and rightly disposed toward both God and their neighbours. Being ignorant of the holiness of God, and the extent of that perfect obedience which he demands, they consider themselves almost blameless, and the proper objects of his high approbation. When the law is brought home to the minds of such persons in its purity, enforced by the authority, and armed with the terrors, of the Most High, it detects numberless transgressions which had formerly escaped their observation, and instead of producing unfeigned repentance and sincere obedience, it excites and exasperates the most wicked dispositions and passions. The criminal propensities and lusts are powerfully stimulated by restraint. The high demands, strict prohibitions, and tremendous curses of the law, give rise to bitter murmuring, presumptuous speculation respecting the rights of God, alienation from his service, and positive enmity against him. Its application to the hearts of carnal men manifests and strengthens all that is evil, and makes them feel that they are dead in sin, and as completely depraved as the Scriptures testify; but it cannot subdue their innate love of sin, nor beget holy love toward God, nor produce such sincere

obedience as he will accept. On this subject, the doctrine, and the recorded experience of our great Apostle, are most decisive. He said, "The strength of sin is the law. For when we were in the flesh, the motions of sins, which were by the law, did work in our members to bring forth fruit unto death. But sin, taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence. For without the law sin was dead. For I was alive without the law once; but, when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died. And the commandment which was ordained unto life, I found to be unto death. For sin taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it slew me." 1 Cor. xv. 56. Rom. vii. 5, 8—11.

It is obvious that no man can keep the divine law while his heart is disaffected to it; therefore we read of only one man that ever yielded perfect obedience to it in this world; and the reason why he did so is plainly assigned—the law of God was *in his heart*, hence it was his delight to fulfil its precepts. This person was called both the son of man and the Son of God: and it is the purpose of the Father, that all his people shall be "conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the first-born among many brethren." He has accordingly promised to *put his law in their mind, and write it in their hearts.*

In these words there is an evident allusion to the manner in which his law was given to the ancient Israelites at Sinai. It was written with the finger of God, on tables of stone, for the purpose of being preserved as the matter of his covenant with them; but as their hearts remained blind and carnal, its holy precepts were contrary to their depraved inclination. Hence they speedily violated them by falling into gross idolatry; and as they continued not in God's covenant, he "regarded them not," ver. 9. As he is unalterably holy and righteous in his nature, and as he claims the cordial steadfast obedience of his people, it is manifest that there could be no comfortable intercourse between him and them ac-

cording to the old covenant, which, by its strict demands and awful threats, is calculated to irritate their perverse tempers, and distress their minds with slavish fear. Therefore he has graciously promised to write his law in their inward parts, and thereby prepare them for serving him without fear, in holiness and righteousness. This promise now claims our attention, as a *third article of the new covenant.*

To ascertain the import of this promise, let us consider,

First, To what law it refers.

Second, In what manner God puts his law into the hearts of his people.

Third, The beneficial consequences which result from its accomplishment.

I. Let us inquire *in what this law consists*, which God has undertaken to put into the mind, and write in the hearts, of his people. It may be affirmed here, in general, that *it denotes the great comprehensive law of love, which corresponds with the holy nature and image of God.* Hence it is said, "God is love: and love is of God. Every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God, and dwelleth in God, and God in him. He that loveth not, knoweth not God; for God is love. Love is the fulfilling of the law. It is the more excellent way, and the bond of perfection, which shall never fail." 1 John iv. 7, 8, 16.

1. The law of love was *originally written in the hearts of our first parents.* We are informed that when the earth was ready for their reception, "God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him: male and female created he them." Gen. i. 26, 27. His word declares that he is light and love, without any thing of a contrary nature; therefore we may conclude, that his image, by which they were distinguished, consisted in unfeigned enlightened love to himself, as the greatest and best of beings; to truth and

righteousness, which correspond with his perfect mind; to his revealed will, as the immediate rule of duty; to his service, as the most noble employment; and to his rational creatures, in proportion as the excellence of his nature was made manifest in them. Having been made upright, they had the capacity of advancing in the knowledge of their Creator, holding spiritual intercourse with him, enjoying his goodness, serving him with delight as the end of their existence, and loving one another for his sake. They were prepared to trace the manifestation of his glory in all his works, to contemplate his adorable perfections with perfect complacency, to be well pleased with whatever was his pleasure, to worship him in Spirit, and acquit themselves with propriety, according to the circumstances in which they were placed. This image of God was mournfully defaced by the entrance and universal prevalence of sin; but he has undertaken to restore it to all his chosen, by creating them again in Christ.

2. The law of love was *partially made known to the heathen by the light of nature.* Though God suffered all nations to walk in their own ways, he left not himself without witness, in that he did good, and gave rain from heaven and fruitful seasons. His works that they beheld, attested his spiritual and eternal existence, wisdom and goodness, mighty power and supreme dominion. Acts xiv. 15—17. Rom. i. 19, 20. By the light of reason and conscience they understood the difference, in may cases, between good and evil. They felt their continual dependence on the care of their unseen Creator, and knew their obligations to seek after him and honour him, to follow truth and righteousness, to live in temperance and peace, to love one another, and render to others as they desired to receive from them. They fulfilled their depraved propensities, by wallowing in all kinds of iniquity; but, in so doing, they were self-condemned, and conscious that they were worthy of punishment. Acts xvii. 26, 27. Rom ii. 14, 15.; i. 32.

3. Love comprehended the *more important parts*

of the law which was given to the Israelites by Moses. This might be evinced by a deliberate review of its numerous precepts and institutions, which either expressly required love to both God and man, or directed them how to promote and manifest their love, by the observance of such rites and customs as were adapted to their peculiar circumstances, and by acquitting themselves in all their several relations, so as thereby most effectually to promote their common interest as a people. Those who are acquainted with the writings of Moses, know that hundreds of precepts might be produced in confirmation of this; but, instead of such a tedious mode of proof, it may be sufficient to refer to the testimony of Christ and his apostle. The former, in answer to a question respecting the great commandment, said, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind: This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets." Matt. xxii. 35—40. The latter, after enumerating various particular precepts, said, "If there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. Love worketh no ill to his neighbour; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law." Rom. xiii. 9, 10. Surely no proofs could be more satistory. Love to God and men was the scope, sum, and intention of the whole law, not excepting those parts of it which were exclusively designed for the Israelites, and of only a temporary obligation. The making of the sanctuary, the appointment of priests and Levites, all the required purifications and sacrifices, holy convocations and sacred festivals, were wisely adapted to cherish and manifest devotedness of heart to God, and mutual affection towards each other. The excellence of the law was devoutly contemplated and admired by the godly who were under it. The pious Psalmist celebrated it as perfect and sure, true and righteous, sweeter

than honey, and more precious than gold. Ps. xix. 7—11.; cxix. throughout. These and similar commendations were given to the whole law, considered as a complex system, every way suited to the peculiar condition of the Israelites, the limited extent of their knowledge, and the design for which they had been separated from the nations: and the more carefully its diversified precepts and institutions are examined, the more they will be admired, as worthy of their divine Author, and calculated to promote the most beneficial purposes.

4. The law of love was *enjoined, with peculiar modifications, by Jesus Christ as the King of Zion.* It has just now been hinted, that the complex law of Moses was given to the Israelites as a temporary covenant, peculiarly adapted to their circumstances as a holy nation, separated from the Gentiles for the service of God; and they were subjected to its dominion, as their schoolmaster and husband, till the time appointed by the Father for the appearing of the promised Messiah. When the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, and made under the law, that he might fulfil its demands, unfold the figurative signification of its ordinances, abolish its covenant form, and redeem his people from its curse, its carnal ordinances, its dominion, and its irritating power; that they might be married to himself as their husband, according to the new covenant, and prepared for bearing good fruit by obeying the law of love given and enforced by him. Gal. iii. 13—25.; iv. 1—7.; v. 1—6. Rom. vi. 14.; vii. 1—6.

The law of love is enjoined by Christ with peculiar modifications, corresponding with the improved condition to which he has advanced his people by his death, the different circumstances in which they are placed, and the cheering prospect of the eternal world which is set before them. They are no longer a worldly kingdom, like the ancient Israelites, but a spiritual, heavenly kingdom, being called out of the world, and renewed in heart by his word and Spirit; therefore those judgments which Moses was

commanded to set before the nation of Israel, are abolished as no longer suitable to their condition. As Christ fulfilled and verified all the figurative rites of the Levitical priesthood, that priesthood and its ordinances are also removed as unnecessary, having answered the end for which they were appointed. The Father constituted him a Priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec, that he might minister before him, not in the holy places made with hands, but in the heavenly temple itself. This change of the priesthood required a corresponding change of the law; therefore the disciples of Jesus are no more commanded to observe the Levitical rites of worship, but to observe such new and simple ordinances as he instituted by his apostles. Heb. vii. 11—24. Col. ii. 14—23.

The people of God under the new covenant, are not settled in one country, like the land of Canaan, but scattered over the whole world; and therefore they are called to recognise fellow-creatures of every clime and colour as *their neighbours*, to love them as themselves, to forgive their offences, and do good, as they have opportunity, unto all. Christ came not to destroy men's lives, but to save them; he promised his disciples no exclusive inheritance of an earthly kind, and gave them no right like the ancient Israelites, to invade the possessions of the wicked, or impose their religious principles on any, by outward force or compulsion. Luke x. 29—37.; ix. 49—56. Matt. v. 38—48.

The disciples of Christ are commanded to relinquish every other religious connexion, and unite themselves into a new spiritual fellowship, as the household of God, to recognise one another as brethren, in distinction from their neighbours at large, who are of the world, and to love one another on evangelical grounds, with peculiar affection, so as thereby to distinguish themselves from the rest of mankind. John xiii. 34, 35. Eph. iv. 1—6, 15, 16, 31, 32.

The comprehensive duty of loving God is enjoined by Christ, with modifications corresponding to

the new and superior discoveries of the divine righteousness and grace with which they are favoured under the new covenant. The Israelites were commanded to love and worship Jehovah, in distinction from all the objects of heathen adoration, because he was the only true God. He had brought them out of the land of bondage, become the God of their nation, and given them the inheritance which he had promised to their fathers; but no clear revelation was afforded them of the distinction of subsistents in the Godhead, nor were special duties required of them toward each of the sacred Sacred Three. This distinction is abundantly manifested under the gospel, by the important place that each of them is represented as sustaining in the economy of salvation; and special duties are demanded of believers toward the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, respectively. The law of love given by Christ, differs from the law of Moses, in proportion as the spiritual knowledge, privileges, and future prospects of his people, are superior to those of the Israelites. Exod. xx. 2. Deut. viii. 1 Peter i. 3—23.

Many parts of the law of Moses have, however, been adopted into the law of Christ, and quoted both by himself and his apostles. These are still to be applied as the rule of duty, in as far as they extend, and to be enforced by evangelical principles, as in the apostolic writings; but no part of the former ought to be used as a comprehensive summary of christian duties at large. The writers of the New Testament frequently introduced certain precepts of the old covenant, but they gave no directions for arranging all the laws of Christ under them, nor did they ever exemplify or recommend any attempt to draw a complete system of laws out of them. Such attempts have been made in modern times; but their uniform tendency has been to produce distorted views of the law of Christ, and teach men to confound his kingdom with the secular kingdoms of this world. His law demands an extent and manifestation of love to himself, his heavenly Father, his disciples, and likewise to fellow-creatures in ge-

neral, even enemies; which are as distinct, and superior in their nature, as the things of God and the eternal world, are more clearly revealed; his gracious communications are more liberally bestowed, and the motives to obedience are more diversified, sublime, and transforming, than they were under the former dispensation. To obtain the most satisfactory illustration and confirmation of these remarks, nothing more will be necessary, than to study the precepts and exhortations contained in the apostolic epistles, together with the evangelical principles and motives with which they are enforced; and then candidly compare both with the precepts and corresponding principles of the law of Moses.

5. This law of love, still farther modified, *shall eternally remain in heaven itself.* At the end of the world the Lord Jesus will come again in glory to raise his people from the dead, gather them all into one, and introduce them into the New Jerusalem, where they shall dwell together for ever in his blissful presence. The righteous shall be richly rewarded according to the deeds done in the body; but their state of reward will also be a state of continued obedience. They shall reign for ever with Christ as kings, and minister incessantly before the throne of God, as priests arrayed in white robes. Rev. vii. 9—15.; xxii. 3—5.

It is impossible for us, in our present state of spiritual childhood, to form any adequate conception of the exalted manner in which the redeemed shall continue to serve God before his celestial throne; but we may safely conclude, that, as their state and circumstances will be far superior to ours, their service will differ greatly from the employment of mortals. The obedience demanded from christians during this life, is suitable to the condition of imperfect creatures, in a state of pilgrimage, while struggling against much inward corruption and many surrounding temptations, exposed to alarming changes, and frequently bowed down under a heavy load of affliction, absent from the Lord, and daily conversant with other mortals, all of whom

are very imperfect, and many altogether wicked. The service in which the righteous shall be employed in the eternal world, will be suitable to their state of personal perfection, and the complete enjoyment of their heavenly inheritance, where they shall be far removed from the assaults of temptation, and the society of the wicked, exalted above the reach of pain and sorrow, honoured with a place in the general assembly of glorious saints and angels, and blessed with the immediate vision and fruition of God and the Lamb. It doth not appear what they shall be, or what they shall be employed to do in heaven, but we know that when Christ shall appear, they shall be like him, for they shall see him as he is. They shall know his love, and enjoy it without interruption, and be transformed into his likeness. Love shall reign among them for ever in the region of celestial bliss, as the highest perfection of their nature, the bond of their inseparable union, the principle of their obedience, and the sum of their duty; when faith and hope, patience and forbearance, prayer and mortification, shall all be honourably laid aside as no longer necessary. 1 Cor. xiii. 8—13.

II. Let us next enquire, in *what manner God puts his law into the hearts* of his people.

1. God does this by *softening and renewing their hearts to receive the impression of it.* The heart of man by nature, is justly compared to a stone. It is hard, unfeeling, and obdurate. While this hardness continues in sinners, they slight and resist the word of God, instead of yielding to its salutary influence; and when they read or hear it, no beneficial impression is produced. He has therefore promised to prepare his people for receiving and keeping his law, by taking away their heart of stone, and giving them a heart of flesh. This change is produced by the gracious influence of his Holy Spirit, which he has undertaken to communicate to them. "A new heart will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you; and I will take away

the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments to do them. I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within you; and I will take the stony heart out of their flesh, and will give them an heart of flesh." Ezek. xxxvi. 26, 27.; xi. 19.

The precise mode in which the Holy Spirit operates on the mind, is not explained, nor is it capable of being understood. His influence is compared to the wind which bloweth where it listeth, and men hear the sound and perceive the effects of it, without comprehending the cause of its changes. John iii. 8. It is sufficient for us to know, that he who made the heart at first, has constant access to it, he is able to change its quality, nor can his power be resisted. By his gracious continued influence, the hearts of all God's chosen are rendered tender and susceptible, humble and contrite. They are made to receive the incorruptible word of truth, feel its power, and submit to its authority.

2. God puts his law into the hearts of his people, by *giving them the true knowledge of it.* The ordinary apprehensions that mankind have of their duty, are very dark and defective, gross and erroneous. Prevailing ignorance of the meaning and extent of the divine law, is the common cause of self-deception, self-righteousness, and spiritual-sloth. Mistaken views of the will of God, are the source of voluntary humility, slavish scrupulosity, will-worship, blind zeal, and pharisaical pride. The false and contradictory representations of the rule of duty that have been given, and earnestly enforced, by mistaken men, are calculated to mislead the simple, and agitate reflecting minds with the fear of being led astray. As no obedience can be acceptable in the sight of God, except it be grounded on his word, the knowledge of his will is indispensably necessary to qualify his people for pleasing him. He has therefore engaged, in the new covenant, to put his law *into their mind*, by giving them the right understanding of the rule, and the reasons of their

duty. In other subordinate promises, he has undertaken to instruct and teach them in the way that they should go, to guide them with his eye, and cause them to hear a voice behind them, saying, "This is the way, walk ye in it." Ps. xxv. 8, 12.; xxxii. 8. Isa. xxx. 21.

The children of God are directed to pray, that they may be filled with the knowledge of his will, in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; and, agreeably to their humble requests, they are made to know the voice of Christ, and to follow him in preference to strangers who attempt to draw them aside. By his perfect example and holy precepts they are enabled to discover the various duties which are required of them toward himself as their Lord, his heavenly Father, his Holy Spirit, his visible disciples, and also towards their neighbours at large, their immediate connections, and even their adversaries. The path of true holiness is made so plain, that the way-faring men, though fools in the estimation of the world, cannot err therein. Col. i. 9. John x. 4, 27.

3. God writes his law in the hearts of his people, by *powerfully applying the principles and motives of acceptable obedience.* The homage which he requires is a reasonable service; and that it may be approved before him, it must be the result of a cordial regard for those grounds of duty which his word has assigned. The prevailing influence of slavish, and other unworthy principles, debases those outward acts of obedience which proceed from them. The Lord looks within to the state of the heart; and if it be not sincere, bodily service will be rejected. The motives by which the laws of Christ are enforced, are numerous and deversified, worthy of their Author, and calculated to exalt the human character. Christians are urged to keep his commands, by the dignity of his nature, the depth of his condescension in becoming a servant in their stead, the amiableness of his perfect example, his love in dying on the cross for their redemption, his endearing relation to them, and the precious

benefits which he bestows; the love of the Father in giving his only Son to be a propitiation for their sins, admitting them into his family, and giving them his promises; the indwelling presence and abiding influence of the Holy Ghost; their peculiar relation to each other as brethren in Christ, the members of one body, and heirs of the same heavenly inheritance; the unspeakable value of their immortal souls, the solemnities of the approaching judgment, and the infinite importance of that everlasting retribution which shall follow.—By these, and many similar grounds of obedience, the law of Christ is enforced throughout the apostolic writings; but carnal men disregard them; nor can they produce the intended effect, till they be brought home to the mind by the power of God. Therefore he engages the attention of his people to them, causes them to perceive their proper import and excellence, fixes them in their memory, brings them seasonably to their recollection, and impresses them upon their hearts. The abiding change produced by the effectual application of evangelical principles, is beautifully illustrated by the new form that metal, while in a state of fusion, receives from the mould into which it is poured. The words of the Apostle, literally rendered, are, "Ye have obeyed from the heart that form or type of doctrine into which ye were delivered," Rom. vi. 17. When the truth is introduced into the mind with divine energy, it abides there, and lives and works effectually. Former prejudices and lofty imaginations are brought down, carnal lusts are subdued, the image of God is gradually restored, and the new man is nourished and made to grow toward perfection. 2 Cor. x. 4, 5. John xvii. 17. 1 Peter i. 22, 23.

4. God writes his law in the hearts of his people, by *sanctifying their consciences to apply it.* The principle of conscience was implanted in the breasts of rational creatures, as a secret monitor, to warn them of the approach of temptation, restrain them from the commission of sin, stimulate them to the performance of duty, cheer them with its approving testimony while obedient to its dictates, and awaken

them to repentance when they offend. Those who are in their natural state of alienation from God, have an evil conscience. Instead of proving a faithful monitor, or a source of comfort, it is defiled with guilt; frequently it misleads them by its blindness; sometimes it is seared and dormant, at other times its cutting reproofs and forebodings of wrath are insupportable. The people of God are delivered from this source of delusion and distress; their consciences are purged from the guilt, and pacified by the blood, of Christ: it is renewed by the power of his grace, rendered capable of discriminating accurately between good and evil, and made tenderly susceptible of the slightest approach of sin. Being thus sanctified and constituted good, it faithfully applies the precepts and prohibitions of the law, gives seasonable warning against temptation, excites believers to the practice of universal obedience, rules in them as the deputy of their supreme Lord, and yields habitual pleasure by its approving testimony. Heb. ix. 14 ; x. 22. 2 Cor. i. 12.

5. God writes his law in the hearts of his people, by *making them willing and able to obey it.* Having an unlimited claim to the highest service of which his creatures are capable, he demands the unfeigned homage of the will and affections, nor can the reluctant observance of an outward form of godliness be accepted, when the heart is not right with him. Therefore he prepares his chosen for serving him, by subduing their natural enmity, reconciling them to himself, and renewing their affections. Agreeably to his promise, he circumcises their heart to love him according to his law, and implants his love in them as their constraining actuating principle; he makes them give full consent to all his precepts as good, and ardently desire to keep them; he works in them both to will and to do his pleasure, and strengthens them by his grace, which is seasonably imparted to help them in time of need. In short, he gives them a holy nature, by creating them anew for himself in Christ; he progressively sanctifies all

their powers by his Spirit, and renders them the living record of his holy will. Deut. xxx. 6. Phil. ii. 13. 2 Cor. v. 14, 17.; iii. 2.

III. Let us now consider the *beneficial consequences which result from the accomplishment of this promise* of the new covenant.

1. In consequence of having the law of God written in their hearts, the obedience of his people is rendered *natural and spontaneous.* On account of the disobedience of the first man, his posterity are shapen in iniquity, and born of the flesh; their heart is addicted to evil, and not to good. Hence, it is as natural for them to fulfil their carnal lusts, as it is for a bitter fountain to yield water of its own quality, or a corrupt tree to bear corrupt fruit. They are justly compared to dogs, swine, and vipers, for, like these creatures, they instinctively shew their offensive qualities; sin is their element, and duty their burden; nor can they abstain from the former, and perform the latter, without doing violence to their native feelings. When the Lord gives his people a new heart to love himself and his law, holiness becomes their proper element: their old propensities decay, gracious affections predominate, they voluntarily yield themselves to his service without compulsion, and honour him with the good fruits of righteousness, as being branches of the true vine. Matt. vii. 17, 18. Rom. vi. 18, 19.

2. Their obedience is rendered *sincere and spiritual.* They are no more liable to the cutting censure which Christ addressed to the old Pharisees, who, like whited sepulchres, appeared beautiful without, but were full of all uncleanness within. Having obtained a new and holy nature, they obey the will of God with their heart. Instead of resting in the formal observance of external rites, they worship their heavenly Father in a devout and spiritual frame of mind. The weightier matters of his law are the objects of their first care, and all its subordinate precepts engage a becoming proportion of their attention. They understand the evangelical grounds

of obedience, and perform the common duties of life as seeing him who is invisible. Unfeigned faith in the presence of God, the mediation of Christ, the solemnities of judgment, and the enduring felicity of the heavenly inheritance, is their actuating governing principle. They put away all hypocrisy and guile, and make it their daily care to be in heart, before their unseen witness, what they seem to be in the sight of men. Their obedience is the fruit of the Spirit; it is accompanied with those gracious dispositions which result from the ingrafted word, and far surpasses the most elaborate attainments of those who seek justification by the works of the law. 2 Cor. v. 9—17.

3. Their obedience is rendered *conspicuous and distinguishing.* It includes a great deal more than an orthodox profession, plausible words, good wishes, or fruitless endeavours. Nor does it consist in self-imposed mortifications, the affectation of needless singularity of manners, or the sanctimonious observance of pharisaical traditions: but in fulfilling the written law of Christ, without adding to it, or diminishing ought from it. A strict and stedfast attendance on all the ordinances of divine worship, both secret and social, is indispensibly required; yet this forms only a very limited part of the christian character. Those who have the law of God in their hearts, are distinguished by the resolute practice of self-denial, in opposition to their former habits, and the strongest propensities of their old man. They crucify the flesh, resist the force of temptation, rule their spirit, endure contradiction with meekness and patience. They follow peace with all men, and treat the injurious with forbearance and forgiveness. The love of truth, and candour in searching for it, render them eminent in the circle of their acquaintance. They are "children that will not lie" or deceive, to promote any private interest; and they detest and avoid all pious frauds in support of religion. Inflexible integrity marks their conduct, and the law of kindness dwells in their breast. They look not to their own things only, but to the things

of others, and they are forward, as they have opportunity, to relieve the distressed, and take part in every good work. They let their light shine before men, so as thereby to put to silence the reproach of the ignorant, and attract general confidence. Their consistency in the hour of trial, shews the excellence and power of the principles by which they are actuated; candid observers are constrained to admit that their religion is genuine, and to acknowledge them as the living epistles of Christ. They have an approving testimony in the conscience of their enemies; and while the wicked hate them, they secretly envy their felicity, and desire to be in their soul's stead. The gracious deportment of the first disciples of Jesus, caused their neighbours to take knowledge of them, as a peculiar people, zealous of good works. 1 Thess. i. 3—10.

4. Their obedience is rendered *stedfast and progressive.* Hypocrites and self-deceivers frequently seem to run well for a time, but their apparent progress is sooner or later interrupted by the fatal influence of some temptation on their carnal lusts, that were never effectually subdued by renewing grace. The commencement of their religious zeal is promising, like plants which quickly spring up on rocky ground; but as the truth is not properly rooted in their mind, their fair profession withers. Sometimes they continue barren and stationary, without openly drawing back from Christ; in other cases they are entangled and overcome by the gross pollutions of the world. Those in whom the law of God is inscribed, have his fear in their hearts, which restrains them from departing from him. Temptations prove them, but do not prevail against them. They grow up and bear fruit with patience, some thirty-fold, some sixty-fold, and some an hundred-fold. While others faint and become weary in the narrow way to everlasting life, they wait on the Lord and renew their strength, and mount up as on eagle's wings. From the condition of babes in Christ, they advance towards the stature of a perfect man. Their new nature frequently acquires a degree of beauty and

strength surpassing the conceptions of those who are in a state of spiritual childhood. They gradually complete the golden chain of christian graces, become eminently useful, and attain the full assurance of hope. Isa. xl. 29—31. 2 Thess. i. 3, 4.

5. Their obedience is rendered *easy and pleasant.* The commandments of God are grievous to unrenewed men, because their carnal mind is enmity against him, and incapable of yielding subjection. They say of his service, What a weariness is it! and long to depart from his presence, and engage in such pursuits and pleasures as are congenial to their disposition. The disciples of Jesus find by experience that his yoke is easy and his burden light, because their minds are under the transforming, cheering influence of faith. Their faith produces hope, and gratitude, and love, which animate and constrain them. Their gracious affections are pleasant, and they render all those duties pleasant which result from them. They are not actuated by the fear of the reluctant slave, but by the spirit of adoption. God is at once the holiest and the happiest of beings, and in proportion as his children are conformed to his image, they participate of his felicity. Having his law in their heart, they obey it with unfeigned delight, like Jesus, who esteemed it his meat to fulfil his will. Their duty and their happiness sweetly coincide. Being made meet for the inheritance of the saints in light, and encouraged by the near prospect of entering it, they enjoy the foretaste of heaven, while employed in those services by which they are trained for mingling in the society, and sharing the delight, of the blessed.

6. Their obedience is *holy and acceptable* in the sight of God. He who searches the heart and rejects the religious performances of the hypocrite, as a profane annoyance which he is weary to bear, takes pleasure in his people who fear him and hope in his mercy. With ineffable complacency he beholds in them the accomplishment of his unchangeable purposes, the effects of his heavenly word, the fruits of his Spirit, and the restoration of his living

image. He highly values their filial obedience, because it is the result of his everlasting love: it manifests the riches and power of his grace, corresponds with his holy nature, and glorifies himself. He sees the end of their creation, redemption, and salvation, happily realized; and is satisfied. Their religious homage and good works are sacrifices with which he is well pleased. He kindly accepts all their services rejoices in them as the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, and takes delight in honouring them with his gracious rewards.

1*st*, This subject shews, that *christians should carefully study the way in which the law of God has been modified since the beginning, and adapted to the progressive advancement of his church.* The comprehensive law of love had its original foundation in the infinite excellence of the divine nature, and the relation between God and his intelligent creatures. As the absolute Sovereign of the universe, he had an unquestionable right to vary and diversify his requirements, according to the capacity and circumstances of his subjects. He has maintained and exercised this right from the beginning, by giving distinct laws to the parents of the human race, the ancient Israelites, and the New Testament church. In order to understand these laws, it is of the utmost importance that we attend implicitly to their obvious meaning and suitableness, to the condition of those to whom they were respectively given, and to the principles of obedience by which they were severally enforced, without presuming to limit their infinite Author by human rules, or introducing any distinctions taken from the variable speculations of metaphysical or moral philosophy, but not evidently grounded on Scripture, or recognized by the sacred writers. If we attempt to enlighten the prophets and apostles by those modern theories with which they were altogether unacquainted, we shall be in the most likely way to pervert their sentiments and bewilder ourselves.

All the laws of Moses had the sanction of equal

divine authority, during the continuance of their obligation; and their excellence as a body, was largely celebrated by those who were under them. They were wisely adapted to the condition of the Israelites, as a kingdom of priests and a holy nation, and abundantly calculated to promote the important design for which they had been separated from all the world to the Lord. The law of Christ is in like manner most properly adapted to the superior condition and capacity of his disciples, as a peculiar people, gathered out of the world into particular churches, furnished with evangelical knowledge, blessed with spiritual privileges, brought into a new relation to God and to one another, and constituted heirs of a heavenly inheritance. These two systems of laws will be found as different from each other, as the state of the Old Testament church was different from that of the New, yet both were holy and worthy of God. They may with great advantage be compared for the illustration of both, but they ought never to be confounded.

Repeated attempts have been made to ingraft the law of Christ on the old covenant, by expounding and amplifying the ten commandments, as the standard of christian duty. Many artificial rules have been devised for extending their meaning, and numerous precepts have been hanged upon them, or classed under them. These attempts have no doubt proceeded from a pious design, but their evident effect has been to confound Christianity with Judaism, to give a distorted representation of both, and to encourage the misapplication of Scripture. These ten commandments were never intended to include the whole duty of man, either under the old covenant or the new. The manifold injunctions of the law and the prophets, did not hang on them, but on the general law of love, of which they were only a special modification. Neither Moses nor the prophets, nor Christ nor his apostles, ever represented them as the comprehensive rule of duty: they gave no directions for arranging all other divine precepts under them; nor did they ever exemplify

or recommend any attempt to draw a complete system of laws out of them. Those who apply the old covenant as the rule of gospel obedience, must either omit many essential parts of the law of Christ, or do the greatest violence to their text, by drawing many precepts out of it, which it never contained. The meaning of the ten words is precisely the same this day, as when they were first given to the Israelites, nor can any method of interpretation be more arbitrary or fallacious, than that which would impose any signification upon them which they had not at the beginning, or make them demand any thing of christians which they did not require of the Jews. It has indeed been said, that Christ's sermon on the mount, was intended as an enlarged exposition on the ten commandments. Let any candid person attentively read that sermon, and he will be convinced of the contrary. If the laws of Christ, as they are enjoined in the apostolic epistles, be deliberately compared with any systematic exposition of the old covenant, the difference will appear manifest; and those who are the most tenacious of human inventions and supposed improvements in the exhibition of divine truth, will be constrained to admit, that moral theories have been carried too far, and that christians ought to quote and apply the laws of Moses in no other way than Christ and the writers of the New Testament did.

The law of Moses enjoined the duties of the Israelites toward JEHOVAH, considered as the God and King of their nation, and toward one another as neighbours. It taught them to slaughter or avoid the rest of mankind, with the exception of strangers. Its precepts were adapted to the very limited extent of their religious knowledge, and the earthly character of the temporal blessings and curses by which they were enforced. The laws of Christ are grounded on principles and privileges which were not understood till he revealed them by his Spirit. He demands many duties, both outward and spiritual, from his disciples toward himself, corresponding with the dignity of his person and offices, his

relations toward them, and the benefits which they derive from him. He likewise requires a variety of duties toward his Father and his Holy Spirit, according as they are revealed in the economy of salvation. He has given them a new commandment to love one another, as brethren and members of the same body, with peculiar affection, distinct from that love of common benevolence which is due to the ungodly. The manner in which believers ought to manifest their brotherly love to each other, is largely explained by the apostles, as the subject of a large proportion of their exhortations to the churches that they addressed. The duties of christians to their neighbours at large, are enjoined by the six appropriate precepts of the old covenant, and other similar precepts of the law of Moses, which are quoted and applied for that purpose. As these have been embodied into the law of Christ, they are binding on his people in their full import, on the ground of gospel principles; but it must be remembered, that he has taught them to recognise their fellow-creatures of every class and character, as neighbours, without exception. They are not called, or even allowed, to destroy men with the sword, like the Israelites, who were required to slaughter whole nations without mercy; but, according to his example, they are commanded to suffer wrong without indulging resentment, to love their enemies, and do good to them that are evil.

The law of Christ should be allowed to rest on its own proper basis, as the immediate and perfect rule of duty; the manner in which the apostles arranged, illustrated, and enforced its precepts, ought to be carefully studied and imitated; and the law of Moses ought to be fairly explained, according to the obvious import of its requirements, and the design for which it was originally given, as a schoolmaster to the church of God in its state of spiritual childhood, and a mirror in which the glory of gospel truth may be advantageously contemplated. Those who best understand the law of love, as it was given by Moses, and the distinction between it and the

same law of love, as it has been modified and enjoined by Christ, will most clearly perceive the excellence and glory of each, and their minds will be prepared to make the proper use of both, without confounding things that differ.

2*d*, This shews the *difference between gospel holiness and the righteousness of the pharisees.* High as the pretensions of the pharisees were, it is necessary for believers to excel them. Our Lord said, "Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven," Matt. v. 20. They sought righteousness by their own works, and, that they might render their labour less difficult, and distinguish themselves with greater facility, they set aside the weightier parts of the law, which required faith and love, justice and mercy; and substituted human traditions and punctilious observances. Their obedience was limited in extent, distorted in form, and hypocritical in principle. Gospel holiness is the obedience of children, not of slaves. It commences with a new heart, as its proper subject, and proceeds from faith as its principle. Unfeigned love is the sum of it; and it corresponds with the law of Christ as its rule, without omitting any thing required therein as unimportant, or making any additions to it for the gratification of self-righteous pride.

3*d*, *As christians advance in holy obedience, they advance in true happiness.* All men naturally seek happiness, but believers alone attain it, and that only in proportion as they are renewed in love. Young disciples too often set happiness and duty in opposition to each other, and place the former in the possession of peculiar privileges, or the experience of agreeable feelings and emotions when they observe the ordinances of grace. The comfort of such persons is commonly as unstable as their views are incorrect and defective. If obedience be set in opposition to spiritual comfort, it cannot be cheerful and sincere: if comfort be separated from progressive renovation and obedience, it cannot be ge-

nuine and abiding. The happiness of the christian arises not merely from the objects that are presented to his view, and the benefits that are conferred on him, but from the proper state of his mind. While the will and affections are at variance with the will of God, discomfort is unavoidable: but when all the bitter turbulent passions are rooted out and subdued, solid peace naturally follows. The painful disease of sin must be healed, before inward ease can be enjoyed. The serious and humble, affectionate and heavenly frame, that the Holy Spirit produces, is pleasant in itself; and as the soul is brought near to God, and assimilated to him in love, it is prepared for lasting felicity, and filled with a delighful serenity which surpasses the understanding of carnal men.

4th, Enlightened complacency in the law of love, is the best and surest evidence of a personal interest in the divine favour and promises. Sudden impulses and impressions are often delusive, and outward acts of obedience, may proceed from improper motives; but a sincere and abiding complacency in the law of God, shews that the heart has been changed, that its enmity has been taken away, and that his law has been inscribed in it according to the new covenant. As the promises are inseparably connected, those who perceive that God has renewed their heart to delight in his law, may conclude that they are the objects of his peculiar love, and that he will accomplish all his other promises to them in the proper season. Delight in the law, is represented as one of the highest and most satisfactory evidences of a gracious state, in Ps. i. 2.; cxix. 24, 77, 97. Rom. vii. 22.

5th, Let us impartially examine and prove ourselves by this test. Permit me to inquire, if you have been convinced of your natural enmity against God and his law? Has your heart been softened down into godly contrition, humility, and love? Has this change been produced by the manifestation of his glory in the gospel? Have you been made to love the person of Christ, to admire the amiableness of

his example, and desire full conformity to him? Do you understand and approve his law as it is exhibited in the apostolic writings, in distinction from all Jewish traditions and human misrepresentations? Do you consent to it, and delight in it on the ground of those evangelical principles of obedience which are intermingled with its precepts? Do you shew the sincerity of your attachment, by practically applying and obeying them all, without laying any of them aside, or artfully accommodating their meaning to your private inclination and convenience? That you may perceive how you stand affected towards the law of Christ, attentively read and ponder such striking parts of it as Matt. v. vi. vii. Rom. xii. Eph. iv. v. vi. Col. iii. iv. Heb. xii.

6*th*, *Let us cordially receive the divine law from Christ, as our Redeemer and our exalted Head.* When Moses and Elias appeared with him in glory, the Father honoured him as his only Son, and commanded the disciples to hear him with becoming deference. Having been invested with supreme authority, as the King of Zion, he invited the heavy laden to come to him for rest, and submit to his easy yoke. Those who comply with his invitation, are called to learn their duty from his perfect example, and follow him, as their leader, under the constraining influence of his love. Many acknowledge the authority of his law in a general way, who artfully resist those parts of it which are contrary to their private prejudices, lusts, and habits. As such persons are justly given up to the delusions which they choose, let us give honour to Christ by implicitly receiving his commands in their plain unsophisticated meaning, as they have been transmitted to us by his apostles.

7*th*, *Let us abound in fervent prayer for the renewing of the Spirit of Christ, to transform our hearts after his image.* As the law was formerly written in tables of stone with the finger of God, it is now written in the fleshly tables of the heart by his Spirit. He has promised to give this Spirit to them that ask him. This should encourage us to imitate the ex-

ample, and adopt the language of the apostles, by frequently imploring the Father to bestow his sanctifying aid. Luke xi. 13. Eph. iii. 14—19. Col. i. 9—11.

8*th*, Once more, *let us resolutely follow holiness of heart and practice, under the influence of unfeigned faith.* Those who rest in the barren speculation of the law of Christ, instead of obeying its precepts, do thereby grieve his Spirit, and harden their hearts. It is equally improper to remain inactive under the pretence of waiting for the aid of his grace, or to expect that he will completely subdue the lusts of the old man in an instantaneous manner, so as thereby to render self-denial no longer necessary. Those who come after Jesus, are commanded to cut off their right hand, to crucify the flesh, to be doers of the word and not hearers only. Instead of indulging or sparing any of our carnal affections, in the vain hope of being delivered from them at once, without any effort on our part, let us stedfastly walk in the Spirit by keeping in view the sanctifying principles of the word, obeying its precepts, mortifying our members, and perfecting holiness in the fear of the Lord. Rom. vii. 12, 13.

PART FOURTH

CONTINUED.

OF THE MATTER OF THE NEW COVENANT.

Article 4th. HEBREWS viii. 10. *I will be to them a God.*

THE new covenant has often been represented as a profound mystery, far surpassing the researches of human beings. Hitherto we have attained plain and intelligible views of its general nature, the an-

cient intimations of its approaching establishment, the parties between whom it is made, and the matter of which it consists. We have seen that it contains the divine promise of the forgiveness of sins, supernatural illumination in the knowledge of God, and the renovation of the heart according to his perfect law of love. But we have now reached that part of its contents, which, it must be allowed, is so vast and sublime in its signification, that, though we may very advantageously apprehend some part of its meaning, we cannot fully comprehend it, nor can mortals ever completely understand or declare its amount: for except our limited minds could comprehend the immensity and glory of the eternal JEHOVAH, we cannot possibly conceive or utter the weighty import of his promise before us, in which he says, "I will be to them a God."

As the unspeakable magnitude and awful sublimity of this subject, should teach us to enter on the contemplation of it with much reverence and self-diffidence, the abundant consolation which it is calculated to impart, and the promise of divine illumination with which it is intimately connected, furnish us with liberal encouragement to pry earnestly after such an acquaintance with it as may be attained, by "comparing spiritual things with spiritual," in our present imperfect state. This is a truly profitable study, which will occupy the minds of the blessed in the heavenly Jerusalem, and in which they will make great and unceasing progress, while it will be their eternal joy to know, that their unlimited and endless researches can never reach its boundless extent. Their enlarging capacity will be incessantly enriched with successive discoveries of God; yet will it be his peculiar and enduring glory, to continue infinitely above the comprehension of his most exalted creatures.

Let us consider,

First, How much is included in having the Lord for a God.

Second, What the Lord is to them who have an interest in him.

Third, The peculiar happiness of those to whom the Lord is a God.

I. Let us consider *how much is included in having the Lord for a God.*

1. Those who have the Lord for their God, have an interest in *the only true God.* Man is an empty, feeble, dependent being. He cannot be self-satisfied, neither has he those things in his own power which he finds necessary for his safety and happiness. Hence the light of nature teaches him that he must have a God, a being of superior power, to care for him and supply his need. The heathen, who are ignorant of the living and true God, acknowledge many other gods, and trust in them, serve them, and make their boast in them: yet all their gods are dumb idols, vanity, and a lie. They have no knowledge of their deluded worshippers, they cannot accept their religious services, nor bestow the smallest favour on their votaries.

Those who choose the only true God as their God, have an interest in all that is divine. They are set free from the burdensome and unprofitable service of all other gods, and from the danger of having their confidence in them disappointed in the time of trouble. Being under the care of the only Sovereign of heaven and earth, who is able to save and to destroy, they have no other god to fear; for their own God is a great King, far exalted above them all. They have the most abundant reason to trust in him, and give honour to him, and rejoice in his matchless greatness; for beside him there is none else. Ps. cxv. Isa. xliii. 10—13.; xliv. 6—24.

2. They have an interest in *all the adorable perfections of God.* Whatsoever he is in his nature as the true God, he is to them and for their benefit. All his attributes are engaged in their behalf, as the sure ground of their safety, improvement, and comfort: His absolute independence sustains them: His omnipresence is constantly with them in all

places whither they go: His omniscience watches over them continually for their welfare. Nothing can separate them from his eyes, which are over them for good, or his ear which is ever open to hear their cry: His mercy pardons their iniquities, and secures them from deserved sorrow: His knowledge is imparted to enlighten their minds. His unerring wisdom directs them with seasonable counsel, and orders all things to work together for their ultimate advantage: His love sweetens their disposition, and yields them the most exquisite pleasure: His holiness transforms and sanctifies them according to his image: His righteousness acquits and justifies them: His almighty power upholds and strengthens, defends and exalts them: His boundless goodness liberally provides for the supply of their need: His faithfulness is pledged for the accomplishment of all his promises to them: His all-sufficiency delights and satisfies their heart: His everlasting and unchangeable duration secures the continuance of their self-conscious existence and felicity in the enjoyment of his fulness.—All his attributes are the object of dread and aversion to those who are estranged from him; but it were easy to multiply Scripture proofs, especially from the book of Psalms, that they are all the source of unspeakable advantage and consolation to them who have the Lord of Hosts on their side.

3. They have an interest in *all the glorious Persons of the Godhead.* The precise mode of the distinct subsistence and peculiar connexion of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, in the unity of the Godhead, is neither defined in Scripture, nor capable of being explained, though too many have entangled themselves and others in hypothetical and contradictory speculations on the subject. We are furnished, however, with most satisfactory evidence of the reality of such a distinction. The Gospel clearly shews, that there are three intelligent Subsistents in the undivided Deity, and ascribes the salvation of sinners to their joint agency. The early contrivance of the whole plan of salvation is

ascribed to the Father, who sent the Redeemer into the world, and who bestows all the blessings of grace and glory through his mediation. All his chosen have an interest in him as the original Author, the summit, and the end of their salvation. They have an interest in the Son of God as their Emmanuel, who assumed their nature, humbled himself for their sake as a servant, endured the cursed death of the cross, that he might redeem them from merited punishment; and ascended to the right hand of the Father to make intercession for them, and at last make them perfectly blessed in his glorious presence. They have also an interest in the Holy Ghost, who inspired the prophets and apostles to reveal the will of God to them, and who, by means of the word of truth, regenerates and quickens, enlightens and renews their minds. He enables them to draw near to the Father through the Son, as their living way of access; he comforts them under all their tribulations, and gradually renders them meet for inheriting the celestial kingdom prepared for them. Some faint but profitable conception may be formed of the invaluable benefits which the godly derive from their personal interest in each of the divine Three, by comparing the following selection of texts on the subject: John xiv. 16, 17, 26.; xvi. 7—15. Rom. v. 1—11.; viii. 9—17. Gal. iv. 4—7. Eph. ii. 4—7, 13—22. 1 Peter i. 2—5, 18—23. 2 Cor. xiii. 14.

4. They have an interest in all *the endearing relations which God sustains towards his people.* Notwithstanding the infinite distance between the Almighty and his most exalted creatures, he has graciously condescended to enter into various near relations with his saints; and he manifests his peculiar kindness toward them, agreeably to the nature of the endearing connection which he has established. He has made himself known to them as their Redeemer and Saviour from degrading bondage and deserved condemnation, the dominion of sin and Satan, and the fear of death and hell. He is their most sincere and constant friend; and he honours

them in preference to the world, by calling them his friends. He imparts his secret counsels to them, and directs them in their pilgrimage, as their Leader and Guide. Having assumed their nature, the Son of God is not ashamed to call them brethren; and he has promised to acknowledge the least of them as his brethren, in the presence of his Father and the holy angels. He has even espoused them to himself, and encouraged them to look up to him as their heavenly Bridegroom, and Husband, and living Head. By their vital union with him, they enjoy the adoption of children. The infinite Creator and Sovereign of the universe has called them his sons and daughters, and they are taught by his Spirit to approach his presence with filial confidence, and address him as their God and heavenly Father. He loves them, instructs them, provides for their future comfort, and pities them as a father; his compassion toward them in all their afflictions, exceeds the tenderness of a mother to her sucking babe. By these and similar relations which he sustains to them, they are far exalted above the rest of mankind; their fiducial dependance on him is cherished, and they are sweetly inclined to cleave to him with their whole heart, and conduct themselves in a manner becoming such distinguishing privileges. John xv. 14, 15. Heb. ii. 11—18. 2 Cor. vi. 18. Isa. liv. 5—10. Ps. ciii. 13.

5. They have an interest in the *gracious thoughts and purposes of God.* Men naturally desire to be remembered by those whom they esteem, and feel highly gratified in being assured that they have a frequent place in their thoughts when unseen and at a distance: It is a superior honour, and a source of greater felicity, to be remembered by the invisible JEHOVAH who fills heaven and earth, and to be the object of his unalterable purposes of mercy. In reference to these things, every one of his people may apply the words of the Psalmist: "Many, O Lord, my God, are thy wonderful works which thou hast done, and thy thoughts which are to us-ward; they cannot be reckoned up in order to thee: if I would declare and speak of them, they are more

than can be numbered!" Ps xl. 5. He thought of them before the foundation of the world, and predestinated them to the blessings of regeneration and adoption, justification and sanctification, preserving grace and eternal glory. Eph. i. 3—10. As his favourable purposes concerning them are all unalterable and sure, he still continues to think of them with earnest unwearied attention. They may be neglected and forgotten by men, but they shall not be forgotten by the Lord. They may be burdened with sorrows, fears, and vexing cares, which they cannot reveal to any fellow-creature, but he is perfectly acquainted with all their feelings and necessities, and in all their afflictions he is afflicted. He will never forget their confidence in himself, nor their prayers, their laudable designs, nor the least of their good works and labours of love, nor the tribulation which they endure for his sake. In the hour of distress they may fear that he has forsaken them, and that he will be favourable no more; but even when he hides his face, and chastens them for their iniquities, he remembers them with inconceivable tenderness. Hence, he says, "I know the thoughts that I think toward you,—thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you an expected end. Is Ephraim my dear son? is he a pleasant child? for since I spake against him, I do earnestly remember him still: therefore, my bowels are troubled for him: I will surely have mercy upon him, saith the Lord. Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? yea, they may forgot, yet will I not forget thee: Behold I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands, thy walls are continually before me." Jer. xxix. 11.; xxxi. 20. Isa. xlix. 15, 16.

The gracious and constant remembrance which God has of his people, sweetens the kindness of their earthly friends towards them, cheers their solitary hours, comforts them in all their tribulations, and supports their hearts in the time of their greatest adversity, when they have occasion to adopt the

complaint of Job, "My kinsfolk have failed, and my familiar friends have forgotten me."

6. They have an interest in the *works of God.* He is the Creator and Preserver, and he will be the Restorer and everlasting Possessor of heaven and earth. His works are great and numerous, wonderfully diversified and beautiful, wisely adapted for usefulness, and calculated to engage the researches and entertain the minds of his chosen. Those who obtain a new covenant relation to God as their Father, do thereby acquire a peculiar interest in all his works, as his heirs in conjunction with his only begotten Son, whom he has appointed Heir of all things: for thus it is written, "If children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ. Therefore let no man glory in man: for all things are yours: whether Paul or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come, all are yours; and ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's. He that sat on the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. He that overcometh shall inherit all things, and I will be his God, and he shall be my son." Rom. viii. 17. 1 Cor. iii. 21—23. Rev. xxi. 5, 7.

Being no longer aliens and condemned criminals, but children and heirs of God, they have an honourable title to that portion of daily provision which he is pleased to bestow on them, and to such future everlasting supplies as their circumstances and necessities may require. They learn to trust in him for all things that they need, and to enjoy his special kindness in all the gifts and benefits which they receive. Instead of glorying in the creature, they glory only in the Lord, as the Author, Possessor, and Disposer of all. The wonders and beauties of nature, present themselves to their mind in a new and most interesting light, as so many specimens of the matchless skill and workmanship of their reconciled God and Father. They contemplate them with growing delight, knowing that the Lord shall rejoice in all his works, and that they shall be for ever employed, along with the rest of his family, in survey-

ing them, enjoying them, and giving him the undivided glory of the whole.

They anticipate the general conflagration of the universe at the last day, without dismay, knowing that heaven and earth shall afterwards be restored in greater perfection and beauty, as the habitation of righteousness, and that their approving Judge will invite them to take possession of the unfading paradise as their endless abode. They shall there have the most favourable opportunity for obtaining a minute and extensive acquaintance with the works of God in their incessant progress and variety. With ineffable delight they shall enjoy his divine presence and wisdom, power and goodness in all his operations. Loving him supremely as their chief end, they shall acquiesce in all his doings, celebrate the accomplishment of his purposes, and rejoice in the perpetuity of his reign. Their felicity will be heightened by the remembrance of their former low state in the days of their vanity. Having tasted the bitter cup of adversity and sorrow, they will be prepared for more exquisitely relishing the waters which shall ever flow from the sacred throne, and the delicious fruits of the tree of life. While they walk together by the streams of paradise, and partake without restraint of its fruits, they shall mark the diversified beauties of the new creation, distinctly comprehend its wonders, and converse familiarly of things too secret and sublime for the scientific researches of mortals. The New Jerusalem, prepared and adorned by God himself, as a bride for her husband, shall be their continuing city, their everlasting home, and the centre of their worship. There shall the general assembly of the first-born clearly understand and gratefully celebrate all the mighty acts of the Lord in redeeming them out of every nation, creating them again in true holiness for his service, exalting them above all their former troubles, and gathering them into one, to behold his glory and dwell for ever in his presence. Envy and covetousness shall be unknown among them. All the blessed shall be admitted to inherit the works and pos-

sessions of their heavenly Father; they shall have all things in common; and their happiness shall be mutually increased by beholding the felicity of each other.

7. They have an interest in *all the promises of God.* His ancient promise to bless all the families of the earth in the seed of Abraham, comprehends all the promises of the new covenant, together with all those subordinate promises by which they are illustrated. These promises are beautifully intermingled with the other parts of divine revelation. They are many in number, great and precious in their nature, and wisely adapted to the necessity of guilty men. They include all things needful for the life which now is, and that which is to come. They are freely proclaimed to the Gentiles by the gospel, and, as Isaac was the heir of the promise made to his father Abraham, all that are born of God and admitted into his family by regeneration, adoption, and faith in his Son, are made heirs of them. Our Apostle, when reasoning on this subject, said, "Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. The Scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe. For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise. Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise." Gal. iii. 16, 22, 26, 29.; iv. 28. Eph. iii. 6.

The seasonable accomplishment of all these promises is abundantly secured to the proper heirs of them by the immutability of the counsel, the faithfulness of the word, and the solemnity of the oath of God the Father; the atoning blood and faithful administration of his Son, who lives for ever to save all that come to God by him; and the earnest of the Holy Spirit in their hearts, by which they are sealed unto the day of redemption. Heb. vi. 17, 18. Rom. viii. 32—35. 2 Cor. i. 22.

As Abraham was called to arise, and walk through the length and breadth of the land of Ca-

naan, which God had promised to give to his offspring; so all the children of God are now called to search the Scripture, and collect its precious promises, to ponder the comprehensive meaning and apply the consolation of them, to wait patiently for their accomplishment, and rejoice in the assured hope that it will far exceed their most enlarged expectations.

II. Let us now consider *what the Lord actually is to them who have an interest in him as their God.*

As JEHOVAH is infinitely greater in himself than limited minds can conceive, he will be much better to his people, and do more for their benefit, than they can ask or anticipate; therefore nothing can be expected under this head, except a plain statement of what he has positively disclosed on this subject in a few particular instances.

1. God is the *light and unerring guide* of his people. The natural light is pleasant to the eyes, and necessary to the welfare of the body; but the spiritual light which they derive from him is of far higher importance to the soul. He delivers them from their natural darkness, and shines into their hearts by his word and Spirit; he guides them through all the stages of their pilgrimage, to the heavenly rest, as the pillar of cloud and fire conducted the camp of Israel in the wilderness: he imparts sound wisdom to direct them in all cases of perplexity, and thereby keeps them from being seduced into the crooked paths of the wicked; and when they reach that city which he has prepared for their final habitation, he will be their immediate and everlasting light. Many passages might be adduced in confirmation of this. Jesus said, "I am the light of the world; he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life. The Lord shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee. The Lord God giveth them light." Hence, every sincere believer may say with undoubting confidence, "The Lord is my light and my sun,

he will guide me with his counsel, and afterward receive me to glory."

2. God is the *righteousness and strength* of his people. They know the value of perfect righteousness sufficient to justify them before the Searcher of hearts, and of strength to fit them for working out their salvation, fighting the good fight of faith, and running the heavenly race which is set before them; yet they feel entirely destitute of both in themselves. They cannot answer for one of their numberless sins. nor have they strength by nature to do any thing spiritually good. They have much ground for shame and self-diffidence, but no reason for despair. "The righteousness of God without the law, is manifested unto all, and upon all that believe. By the obedience of one shall many be made righteous. For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." Rom. iii. 21—26.; v. 19—21. 2 Cor. v. 21.

God is also the strength of his saints. He works in them both to will and to do of his good pleasure. He establishes their pious resolutions, revives their graces, and animates them for the performance of their duty in time of need. "He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might, he increaseth strength." They take occasion from their conscious weakness to place their sole dependance on his everlasting strength, and glory in their infirmities, that his power may rest upon them. By his grace which is sufficient for them, they are enabled to rise above human imbecility, to run without fainting or becoming weary, and soar heavenward as on eagle's wings. Trusting in his almighty arm, they gird on their spiritual armour, resist temptation, and overcome all the powers of darkness. Though surrounded with dangers from which they have no ability to rescue themselves, they hope to be more than conquerors through him that loved them; and in the hour of success, they ascribe the undivided honour of all their attainments to him, saying, "Surely in the Lord have I righteousness

and strength." Is. xl. 28—31.; xlv. 24. 2 Cor. xii. 9, 10.

3. God is the *refuge and dwelling-place* of his people. When the Israelites were in the waste howling wilderness, far from the habitations of men, their prophet taught them to repose with confidence under the shadow of the Almighty, saying, Lord thou hast been our dwelling-place in all generations," Ps. xc. 1. In allusion to the cities of refuge which were appointed for the protection of the manslayer, or to those rocks and strong-holds into which David and his followers escaped from the pursuit of their enemies, the God of salvation is frequently represented as the refuge of his servants. "He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High, shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the Lord, he is my refuge, and my fortress: my God, in him will I trust. He only is my rock and my salvation: he is my defence; I shall not be moved." Ps. xci. 1, 2.; lxii. 6, 7.

God is a near and accessible refuge to all his people, a very present help in time of trouble; and they are graciously invited to enter into their chambers, and shut the door, and hide themselves in the moment of impending evil. He is likewise a sure and impregnable refuge, which no enemy can force, and which can never fail or decay. The godly are strangers and pilgrims in this world; they are all exposed to daily changes and troubles; many of them have no habitation in it, that they can claim as their own, and frequently they find little rest for their weary feet; yet, in the absence of all outward comforts, when no man seems to care for their soul, they may trust in their ever present God as their hiding place, and lie down in peace under his shadow.

4. God is the *glory and song* of his people, carnal men naturally magnify the temporal advantages by which they are distinguished, and boast of them as a ground of superiority. In opposition to such empty pride, the Lord has said, "Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory

in his riches; for all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass." Earthly endowments and acquirements are all vain and declining; they disappoint the confidence of their possessors, and put them to shame in the season of trial. The heirs of promise feel their own insignificance, and blush when they reflect on their unworthiness; they acknowledge the emptiness of the creature, and cease from making flesh their arm, or giving undue praise to man. God is their glory, because in him all possible perfections are unalterably united, and he is the Author of every good gift. He is their own God; their relation to him is near and permanent, and from him they derive seasonable supplies in time of need. Therefore, as the ransomed tribes boasted in him, as their Captain and their Song, when they celebrated his praise at the Red Sea, all his saints are taught to glory in him, and sing of his mercy and judgment, his equitable administration and distinguishing love, the salvation which he bestows, and his divine fulness that can never be exhausted. "Behold, God is my salvation: I will trust, and not be afraid; for the LORD JEHOVAH is my strength and my song, he also is become my salvation." Isa. xii. 2.

5. God is the *exceeding great reward and portion* of his people. After the father of them that believe had generously declined to accept any personal remuneration for rescuing the king of Sodom, and his people with their goods, the word of the Lord came to him in a vision, saying, "Fear not, Abram: I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward," Gen. xv. 1. He encourages the spiritual seed of Abraham to abound in well-doing, by promising to reward them according to their works; not as a master gives the stipulated wages to a hired servant, but as an indulgent father honours the obedience of his children. Their best performances could never merit any compensation in his sight, for they are unprofitable servants: yet he has undertaken to honour them with an unfading crown. He will advance them to abide in his presence, and partake for ever of the joys which are at his right hand:

and, because he can bestow nothing greater or better, he has condescended to become their reward and portion himself; so that if his divine perfection and felicity remain, their happiness cannot possibly fail. Hence, every one of them may adopt the joyful language of the Psalmist: "The Lord is the portion of mine inheritance, and of my cup. The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places: yea, I have a goodly heritage. Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee. My flesh and my heart faileth: but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever." Ps. xvi. 5, 6.; lxxiii. 25, 26.

6. God is *all in all* to his people. As we cannot fully comprehend what he is in himself, it is impossible that we should ever declare what he will be to the objects of his favour: it may therefore be proper to close this subject, by simply observing, that he is all to them that they need, to render them safe from danger, and altogether perfect and happy. He is all that they can enjoy, and infinitely more than their limited capacity can receive. His divine fullness and precious benefits are wisely adapted to their necessity, in all conceivable circumstances in which they can be placed, whether of temptation or tribulation, whether they be actively employed in the performance of social duties, or shut up in solitary affliction, whether they be passing through the dark valley of death or existing in the unknown region of separate spirits. Those terrestrial objects which are most valuable and useful, are figuratively applied to aid their apprehensions, by shewing, that the blessings which may be derived from him are far superior to houses and lands, the best accommodation which wealth can procure or imagination suggest, the highest personal accomplishments, or the society of the most enlightened and affectionate friends. Wherever any of his people is, God is there: he abides with them all, and manifests himself to them in a way unknown to the world. None of them shall ever be overlooked or left desolate by him, notwithstanding their local distance from each

other, and the great diversity of their personal talents and circumstances. Important and unknown changes in his administration, may be expected at the end of the world, but he will still be the same to them who love him. Every new change will serve to bring them nearer to himself, and be accompanied with new communications of his goodness. Through the revolving ages of eternity, he will be the object of their supreme love and delight; he will continue to enlarge their capacity and fulfil their desires, and they shall know by blissful experience, what it is to enjoy all things in God, and God in all, without intermission. 1 Cor. xv. 28. Rev. xxi. 3—6.

III. Let us now consider the *peculiar happiness of those who have an interest in the Lord as their God.*

1. Those who have the Lord for their God, are happy in being *delivered from the distress and danger* to which the rest of mankind are exposed by sin. They were lost and ready to perish, but they have been graciously sought and found. They were sometime heavy laden and weary, but they have obtained rest from their burden. They are no more liable to the wrath of God which is revealed against the wicked, for he is reconciled to them through his Son; his anger is turned away, and he comforts them. They cannot be cast into hell to be tormented with hypocrites and unbelievers, for there is no condemnation to them who are in Christ. They are set free from the slavish fear of death and judgment. Death to them is changed into a benefit, as it will put an end to their sorrows, and remove the vail of flesh which separates them from the principal objects of their affection. They no longer think of their Judge with dismay, for he is their Redeemer and their most desired friend. Their turbulent restless passions have been subdued, and their hearts, which were once like the troubled sea, rendered quiet. They no more shrink from the presence of God, nor depart from him under the influence of dread and dislike, because their mind is sincerely reconciled to his character and will. Satan their former ty-

rant, may assault them with his fiery darts, but the God of peace will shortly bruise him under their feet. Other enemies may hate, and revile, and persecute them, but they can do them no essential injury, because the Lord of Hosts is on their side. They may look forward to all future changes and dangers with unshaken fortitude, and boldly adopt the words of the Apostle, "We know that all things work together for good, to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us who can be against us?" Rom. viii. 1, 28, 31.

2. They are happy, because *his service is pleasant and advantageous.* Their sorrows shall be greatly multiplied who hasten after other gods; for their rites are foolish and disgusting, burdensome and cruel. The service of the Lord is infinitely preferable to the service of sin and Satan, which enslaves, degrades, and dreadfully exposes all who submit to it. None of his commands are burdensome or grievous. Their meaning is simple, free from perplexing uncertainty, and capable of being easily comprehended by every sincere inquirer. They are all just and good in their nature, and enforced by the most encouraging, animating, and exalting principles. The obedience which he requires, is rendered practicable and easy by the effectual aid of his Holy Spirit, and the purifying influence of faith and hope, which enables them to overcome the world, resist temptation, and produce the fruits of righteousness. His service is highly advantageous, being attended with the cheering testimony of an approving conscience, the special manifestation of the divine favour and the gladdening consolations of the Spirit of truth. Those who anciently served him under the dark and burdensome dispensation of Moses, were more happy than the rest of mankind: how desirable then must the condition of those be, who walk in the clear light of the gospel, under the easy yoke and mild administration of Jesus Christ! They find more delight in his service than can be attained in the ways of sin, even while they are encompassed

with personal infirmities, and proved by tribulation; how unspeakably blessed then, must the issue of it be, when they shall rest from their labours, and their works shall follow them! None of their faithful services, or sufferings for his sake, shall be forgotten or lost. He will fully vindicate their character from the false aspersions of their enemies, acknowledge their sincerity, manifest the extent of their obedience before the universe, and grant them an unfading reward in heaven, according to their works. Matt. xi. 29, 30. 1 John v. 3, 4. Rev. xxii. 12, 14.

3. The people of God are peculiarly happy, because *his favour sweetens all the troubles, and heightens all the comforts of their lot.* They are not exempted from affliction during this life, but rather called to live by faith on invisible objects, to endure tribulation with patience, and submit with filial resignation to a course of salutary discipline. Frequently do they receive a large portion of evil things; but their temporal distress is not the beginning of eternal sorrow. It is one of the necessary tokens of their adoption, and proceeds from the faithfulness and love of their heavenly Father. He chastens them, not for his own pleasure, but for their profit, that they may be partakers of his holiness. As their tribulations abound, he makes his consolations also to abound, and supports them inwardly, even in the midst of outward adversity, with better joys than sinners can attain in their greatest prosperity. They are enabled to glory in tribulation, because the genuineness of their faith is thereby proved and manifested, their spiritual activity is promoted, they are rendered more conformable to their beloved Redeemer, who suffered in their stead, and better prepared for participating of the unmingled pleasures that flow from his right hand. Heb. xii. 3—11. 2 Cor. i. 3—5. Rom. v. 3—5.

Their interest in God greatly heightens the enjoyment of their various temporal comforts, as they are freed from his consuming curse which rests on all the earthly gratifications of the wicked, and renders

even the ordinary provisions of their table a snare and a stumbling-block to them. The use of them is not imbittered by the guilty fear of an omniscient witness, an incensed judge, and sudden destruction from his presence. While they thankfully partake of the streams which pass away, they rejoice that the over-flowing fountain of true happiness is their own. They taste the special goodness of the Lord in the common benefits which he bestows, and receive them as the cheering pledge of what he has laid up for them in heaven.

4. The people of God are happy, because *he will never leave them nor forsake them.* The affection of earthly friends is sweet, but not worthy to be trusted in, for the most esteemed creatures are liable to change, and a present attachment may be succeeded by animosity. The loving kindness of the Lord is better than life, and it can neither change nor decay. Of this he has given assurance, saying, "As I have sworn, that the waters of Noah should no more go over the earth; so have I sworn, that I would not be wroth with thee, nor rebuke thee. For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed, but my kindness shall not depart from thee." Isa. liv. 9, 10.

The most affectionate and steadfast friends may be removed by death, or they may be at a distant part of the world when their kind offices are required: but the Lord lives for evermore, as the hope of his saints; nothing can separate them from his love, and he will never turn away from them, nor cease to do them good. Their own circumstances and feelings may be changed, their brethren may disappoint their expectation and prove miserable comforters, their most sincere lovers and friends may be put far from them, and their acquaintance into darkness: but their first and greatest Friend, their God and Saviour, will never leave them desolate. He will be with them in all places whither they go, to keep them, and perform all that he has promised. As he was with Abraham and Jacob in all the stages of their pilgrimage, so will he be with all their spiritual children,

for to every one of them he has pledged his faithful word, saying, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." Heb. xiii. 5. Gen. xxviii. 15. Rom. viii. 35—39.

5. They are happy, as *they have the most extensive, unfading, and satisfying inheritance.* The word inheritance is of very comprehensive signification in the Scriptures. It denotes more than food and raiment, decent accommodation and wealth. The land of Canaan, which flowed with milk and honey, and abounded in corn, wine and oil, was given to the Israelites as their inheritance: and those among whom it was divided, had the privilege of possessing a competent portion of it which could not be alienated, of searching out its hidden treasures, cultivating it as their own, and enjoying all its diversified productions. The land of Israel was a figure of the more extensive inheritance of the redeemed, which, as we have already seen, includes all that God is in himself, all that belongs to him as the Possessor of heaven and earth, and all that he has promised to them who love him. The former inhabitants of Canaan, were destroyed, because they had polluted it with their iniquities; and when the Israelites imitated their example, they also were dispossessed and carried captive: but believers have an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, that fadeth not away: It is reserved in heaven for them, and they are kept by the power of God to enjoy its fulness: It was never polluted with sin, no unclean thing can enter it, neither can it ever be lost. The most prosperous of the Israelites, found that all their terrestrial possessions and acquirements were vanity. They were attended with vexation and sorrow which they could not remove, and too low and empty in their nature, to satisfy the mind. King Solomon made an experiment, on a large scale, to ascertain the greatest pleasure that the skilful management of earthly wealth could yield. After he had built magnificent houses and planted gardens, made refreshing pools of water, and procured all kinds of music, he left the following very affecting testimony for the instruction of

all succeeding generations: "Whatsoever mine eyes desired, I kept not from them; I withheld not my heart from any joy. Then I looked on all the works that my hands had wrought, and on the labour that I had laboured to do: and behold, all was vanity and vexation of spirit, and there was no profit under the sun!" Eccles. ii. 1—11.

The inheritance of the people of God is abundantly adequate to gratify all the desires of the most capacious mind. It includes all that is great and excellent, divine and heavenly. The enjoyment of it refines the taste, enlarges the mental capacity, sanctifies the affections, and satisfies the heart. The first fruits of it, of which they partake in this imperfect state, frequently yield a truly pleasing refreshment; when they shall be completely freed from all the troubles of this mortal life, advanced to a state of personal perfection, and put in possession of all its fulness, their satisfaction will be exquisite and abiding. 1 Peter i. 4—8.

6. The people of God shall be happy, because *he will give them eternal life to inherit all things.* The happiness of mankind in this world is limited, not only by the infirmities of the body, the depravity of the mind, and the various outward troubles to which they are daily exposed, but by the short duration and continual uncertainty of their life itself; which is emphatically represented as an handbreadth, or "a vapour that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away." "Man is of few days, and full of trouble; he cometh forth like a flower, and is cut down; he fleeth also as a shadow, and continueth not." A personal interest in the Lord as a covenant God, secures a resurrection from the dead, at the last day, by which the body shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption, exalted above all the troubles of the present state of discipline, and rendered incorruptible, immortal, and glorious, like the celestial body of Christ. The children of the resurrection shall be blessed with clearness of apprehension, largeness of intellectual capacity, and the most advantageous opportunities for the endless acquisition of knowledge and wisdom, and for per-

petually advancing in divine love and felicity, far beyond the reach of sin, or sorrow, or the fear of evil. Because their God and Saviour lives without end, they shall live also. They shall exist for ever in a state of self-conscious perfection, to enjoy his divine fulness without restraint, and serve him as the companions of his holy angels. After they shall have spent millions of ages in the kingdom of glory, the whole of that vast period will seem short in their apprehension, and they will rejoice in the prospect of a boundless duration of life, and progressive felicity that will ever remain before them.

The inseparable connexion between a covenant relation to God, and the enjoyment of eternal life, is clearly stated by our Lord in his reasoning with the Sadducees, in Luke xx. 35—38. "They who shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world, and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry, nor are given in marriage. Neither can they die any more, for they are equal to the angels, and are the children of God, being the children of the resurrection. Now that the dead are raised, even Moses shewed at the bush, when he called the Lord the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. For he is not a God of the dead, but of the living: for all live unto him." The resurrection of the saints to everlasting life, is frequently mentioned in the New Testament, as the great comprehensive blessing of the gospel, by which the reigning grace of God is most signally displayed. "This is the promise that he hath promised us, even eternal life." Consult 1 John ii. 25.; v. 11—13. Rom. v. 20, 21.; viii. 19—23. 1 Cor. xv. 35—57.

7. The people of God shall be happy, because *he will do much more for them than they are able to ask or comprehend.* We can easily conceive how believers might be rendered far more happy than they are in this world, by being completely delivered from all present evil, such as sin, and temptation, want of care, pain and sorrow, infirmity and death. We can also form some faint apprehension of the happiness arising from the rapid increase of know-

ledge, the tranquillity of a sanctified mind, the fellowship of a numerous family united by enlightened love, and the honour of being employed in the immediate service of God and the Lamb. But many other things are partially revealed concerning the future world, which surpass our most enlarged thoughts. While we live in natural bodies composed of flesh and blood, we cannot understand what the spiritual and celestial bodies of the righteous shall be. Their new manner of perceiving, conversing, and acting, and the undecaying agility with which they shall be endued, are all above our comprehension. Experience and observation enable us to form a right judgment of the condition of imperfect mortals around us; but the inferiority of our present state, renders it impossible for us to conceive the felicity of being *like the holy angels.* As we have never seen one of these superior beings, the pleasure of joining the whole celestial host, conversing freely with them, deriving important information from their early, extensive acquaintance with the works of their Creator, and taking part in their employment, must far exceed all that we can anticipate. None who dwell on earth in cottages of clay, can either describe the unseen glories, or measure the vast extent, of heaven. While christians are at home in the body, they are absent from the Lord. Their views of him are grounded only on distant report, and the spiritual comfort which they attain, is the result of believing in what they cannot actually see till they enter the world of spirits. They know him only in part, and perceive the object of their hope darkly as in enigma: but the felicity of seeing him as he is, in the midst of his Father's throne, and enjoying the full and perpetual fruition of him, can be known only by blissful experience.

Who can conceive how much the wisdom of God can contrive, or his love bestow, or his power accomplish for the objects of his special favour! He has frequently conferred temporal wealth, and honours, and kingdoms on the wicked; yet their present portion of good things, is represented as insignificant when

compared with that of his children. The righteous have sometimes been destitute, despised, and tormented in this world; yet these afflictions have been termed light, and unworthy to be compared with their future glory. God so loved them, even when they were enemies, that he spared not his own Son, but delivered him up to the death of the cross for their redemption: it would therefore be absurd and criminal to suppose, that, after being reconciled to him, and made perfect in holiness, his bounty toward them could disappoint their most enlarged expectation. It will assuredly be great, in proportion to the dignity of their Redeemer, and the depth of abasement to which he submitted as their substitute. As his condescension on this account passed knowledge, so will their ultimate felicity which shall result from it. The beloved apostle, who understood much more of the heavenly things than ordinary disciples, said, "It doth not yet appear what we shall be." We may therefore conclude, that our most exalted conceptions of the future felicity of the righteous, are all low and childish, compared with what they shall realize by dwelling for ever in the immediate presence of the Lord, and being filled with the fulness of God. When they shall see the glory of the heavenly Jerusalem, and partake of the fruits of paradise, they will have occasion to acknowledge that the half had not been told them on earth; and through the revolving ages of eternity, their God will continue to astonish them with new manifestations of his wisdom, love, and power, by doing great things which they looked not for. 2 Cor. iv. 17. Rom. viii. 18, 32. Eph. iii. 19—21.

1*st*, This subject shews, that *the gospel exhibits a large and most illustrious object for our fath.* The method of salvation which it discloses, is simple, and capable of being easily explained; but we ought not on that account to despise it, as a low or contracted creed, consisting of only a few facts and detached articles of doctrine. It reveals the great things of God and eternity in their beautiful connexion; it presents

to the reflecting mind the most noble objects of contemplation ; displays an accessible portion, adequate to satisfy the most boundless desires ; and furnishes babes in Christ with the means of daily growing in faith, by leaving the principles of his doctrine, and going on to perfection. Instead of limiting the thoughts of believers within the narrow compass of obvious and common-place maxims, or encouraging them to rest satisfied with a superficial knowledge of unseen things ; it opens a wide field for the most active researches, and rewards their sincere inquiries with the treasures of heavenly wisdom. It calls their attention to sublime and interesting discoveries of the distinct subsistents of the Godhead, their adorable attributes, eternal purposes, wonderful works, precious promises, and enduring relations to the heirs of salvation. These things are of more intrinsic value than the whole material creation : their importance will remain unchanged when this world shall pass away ; and they deserve to be daily studied and cordially received as the life and joy of the soul.

2*d*, *Those who reject and hate God must be equally inexcusable and miserable.* We have seen that he has graciously revealed himself to the guilty and helpless, as a pardoning God, and Father, and portion. What more could he have done to shew himself worthy of their confidence, affection, and obedience ? Surely, nothing can be more unreasonable or criminal than the continuance of their natural alienation, after such condescension and love have been manifested on his part. They forsake the only fountain of living waters, and prefer death. By despising and rejecting the noblest portion of the soul, they exclude themselves from the enjoyment of it, and unavoidably become desolate. As they refuse to be reconciled to the God of love, and render themselves the objects of his righteous indignation, they must be condemned from his presence, and their final misery will be aggravated by the remembrance of their former obstinacy.

3*d*, *We should seriously enquire whether we have*

obtained a personal interest in the Lord as our God. His people are all made to differ from the rest of mankind; and their change of state may be known by the corresponding change of their experience and disposition. Permit me therefore to enquire, if you have been truly convinced of your natural distance and estrangement from God? Have you been made to ascribe all the blame of your past rebellion to your own evil heart, to humble yourself before him with unfeigned repentance, and desire his favour as better than life? Has he drawn your heart to himself by the doctrine of his Son, and made you to return and seek him by the prayer of faith? Has the doctrine of the cross brought down your natural enmity, and reconciled you to his character and will? Have you chosen him for ever as your God and portion, and do you now love him in preference to all earthly objects? Has he begun to restore his holy image in your soul, and to render his service your delight? By the deliberate application of these plain questions, you may ascertain whether the Lord be your covenant God, or your offended Judge.

4*th*, *Those who have reason to fear that they have hitherto lived without God, ought without delay to comply with his message of reconciliation.* While sinners flatter themselves, by resting in doubtful marks of acceptance, the design of the gospel which they hear, is frustrated, and their souls exposed to the danger of fatal disappointment at last. Therefore the openly wicked, and all who are of doubtful character, should yield to salutary warning, and cordially receive the divine proclamation of mercy as an immediate and sure foundation of hope. God declares his willingness to pardon the rebellious through the death of his Son, and make them partakers of all the privileges of his family. Let such consider and embrace his gracious call, and they shall never be put to shame. Isa. lv. 6, 7. 2 Cor. v. 18—21.

5*th*, *Those who have the Lord for their God, ought to live under the abiding impression of what he is to them, and what he will be to them for ever.* Carnal men

love to compute the amount of their temporal wealth, and to maintain a place in society corresponding with their station; and believers, who have been born again to a more goodly heritage, should frequently ponder the manifold privileges to which they have been advanced, and learn to walk worthy of them. If the Lord be indeed your God, you may well conclude that the bitterness of death is past, for your everlasting interest is already secured. You have escaped dangers of unspeakable magnitude, and therefore you may calmly endure all the remaining troubles of this life, as light and momentary. Whatever your lot on earth be, your condition is happy and desirable, when compared with that of the most prosperous men of this world; and if you make a proper use of your spiritual advantages, you cannot fail to enjoy abundant consolation. Frequently consider how much is included in your divine portion, and fairly contrast it with the fading portion of those who place their happiness in the possession of earthly things. Contemplate all the revealed glories of the new Jerusalem, and the heavenly paradise; view them all as your own; and then solemnly enquire, what you ought to be in all holy conversation and godliness. Enquire in what manner you ought to think of God, and trust in him, and love him, and worship him. As the infinite JEHOVAH is your own God, inquire how you ought to honour him in your heart, your closet, your family, in his church, and before the world. Consider how you should acquit yourself in the season of temptation and affliction, of duty and difficulty; how uprightly and consistently you should walk in the sight of your carnal neighbours; and how affectionately you should associate with your christian brethren, who are children of the same Father, and joint heirs of the same glory. Consider how necessary it is that you rise above the sordid allurements of sin, and the vanities of time, the cares of this life, and the slavish fear of future afflictions; and long ardently for the full participation of those joys which flow from the celestial throne. In short, let it be your care, in passing

through all the remaining changes, and in fulfilling all the future duties of your pilgrimage, to enquire what your temper and deportment ought to be, seeing the Lord is your God; and this principle of obedience will do more to direct and animate you in his service, than a thousand minute rules of conduct devised by human wisdom.

PART FOURTH

CONTINUED.

OF THE MATTER OF THE NEW COVENANT.

Article 5th. HEBREWS viii. 10. *They shall be to me a people.*

THE endearing relation between God and his spiritual Israel, is mutual. As he is their God according to the new covenant, they are his people. In this declaration there is an evident allusion to his ancient figurative Israel, whom he separated from the rest of mankind, and brought into a peculiar covenant with himself. He dwelt among them in his sanctuary as their Sovereign, governed them by his laws, defended them from their enemies, made liberal provision for their necessity, and gave them access to himself as their God. On the other hand, they cleaved to him in perference to all other gods, trusted in his care, submitted to his dominion, assembled periodically at his sanctuary, honoured him with their offerings, and rejoiced in his great goodness. The early zeal of the Israelites was but temporary, and their goodness, like the morning cloud or the vanishing dew. After being comfortably settled in the land promised to their fathers, they soon undervalued their distinguishing privileges, and forsook their God who had redeemed them: "They continued not in my covenant, and I regarded them not, saith the Lord." By the mouth of his prophet

he justly upbraided them for their unsteadfastness, and said, "Ye are not my people, and I will not be your God," Hosea i. 9. As the fleshly Israel forsook the Lord, and violated his covenant with them, he promised to establish a better and more abiding covenant with his spiritual Israel, saying, in the words before us, "They shall be to me a people."

This is the last article of the new covenant which now remains to be considered, according to the general arrangement proposed. To ascertain the import of this promise, let us enquire,

First, In what peculiar manner God's spiritual Israel become his people, in distinction from the rest of mankind.

Second, In what respects they become his.

Third, For what purposes they become his, or what they are to God as his people.

I. Let us enquire in what *peculiar manner* God's spiritual Israel become his own. They belong to God by right of creation, in common with others; but it is not chiefly or properly on this ground that they are called his people; for he is the Creator, Preserver, and supreme Lord of all mankind: but the wicked are represented as without God in the world. They have forsaken him, departed far from him, and become his enemies in their minds. They desire to forget and avoid God, and say to him, "Depart from us, for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways." In many cases they attempt to disguise and conceal their natural enmity against him, not only from fellow-creatures, but from their own consciences; yet they are all guilty of loving earthly pleasures more than God, and serving sin in their hearts. They are alienated from the life of God; and while they continue impenitent, they can have no fellowship with him. Instead of being his by any gracious relation, it is affirmed by the highest authority, that they are the children of the devil, and he is their father and their god. 1 John iii. 8, 10, John viii. 44. 2 Cor. iv. 4.

All God's spiritual Israel are his own, on higher and peculiar grounds; as,

1. *He has chosen them out of the world for himself.* The posterity of Jacob were anciently separated from the nations for God, as a figure, not in consequence of their numbers, or their superior righteousness, but because he had freely loved them, and chosen them in preference to all others. Hence Moses said, "Thou art a holy people unto the Lord thy God: the Lord thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto himself, above all people that are on the face of the earth. The Lord did not set his love upon you, nor choose you, because ye were more in number than any people, for ye were the fewest of all people, but because the Lord loved you. Understand, therefore, that the Lord thy God giveth thee not this good land to possess it, for thy righteousness; for thou art a stiff-necked people." Deut. vii. 6—8.; ix. 4—6. In allusion to the distinguishing honours that the Lord conferred on the tribes, because he had chosen them to himself, it is now said to all sincere believers in Christ, "Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people: who in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God," 1 Pet. ii. 9, 10.

Before the foundation of this world was laid, the Lord foresaw the fallen helpless condition of all mankind, in consequence of the early entrance of sin among them, and made choice of a certain determinate number of them to be his people, from the most unmerited sovereign love toward them. In his eternal counsels he predestinated them to the adoption of children, in his only Son Jesus Christ as their head, and unalterably determined all the means of their complete salvation. Those who were predestinated from everlasting, are all in due time called out of darkness into the marvellous light of divine truth, and from the power of Satan unto God. They are wholly indebted to his love in choosing them, as the original cause of all the invaluable blessings of which they are made partakers.

They are taught to make this grateful acknowledgement, by the example of our Apostle: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: according as he hath chosen us in him, before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy, and without blame before him in in love: having predestinated us to the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will."

As the free and eternal love of God was the sole cause of his people's election, it secures their effectual calling and spiritual renovation, as well as their justification and adoption; therefore nothing can be more contrary to the Scriptures, than to separate personal holiness from other gracious privileges, or to suppose, that if any man have been predestinated to salvation, he shall be admitted into heaven at last, whether converted from sin or not. Renovation of heart is an essential part of that salvation to which God has elected his people; and the same purpose which fore-ordained the end, appointed also the necessary means. Those who murmur against the administration of the Almighty, by surmising, either that a person may be righteous and yet perish, because not elected; or that a person who has been elected to salvation, may, on that account, be advanced to the heavenly glory, without being previously made righteous;—either impose upon themselves by a culpable misrepresentation of this subject, or shamefully betray the profaneness of their disposition, by reproaching the Lord, as if he were capable of the grossest inconsistency. His original love in choosing them for himself, and the happy consequences which infallibly result from it, are plainly set forth in the following testimonies, Eph. i. 3—5. 2 Thess. ii. 13, 14. Rom. viii. 28—30.; ix. 8—26.; xi. 5—7.

2. *God has graciously redeemed his people to himself.* He claimed a peculiar interest in the tribes of Israel, because he had redeemed them from bondage with his mighty arm; hence he said, "Fear

not; for I have redeemed thee: thou art mine. I gave Egypt for thy ransom, Ethiopia and Seba for thee," Isa. xliii. 1, 3. His spiritual Israel stood in need of redemption from enemies and dangers that were far more formidable than Pharaoh and his servants, as they were involved in the most degrading bondage, and exposed to everlasting condemnation in the world to come. Their circumstances required the most precious ransom, such as they could never have provided for themselves, nor could they have had the boldness to propose or solicit it in their greatest extremity. In the most unexpected and wonderful condescension and love, God redeemed them to himself, by giving his only begotten Son to appear in their nature, and suffer the accursed death of the cross in their stead. On this interesting subject, the sacred writers have spoken in the most unequivocal and satisfactory manner: "Ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot. Who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world. Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree. Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people." 1 Pet. i. 18, 19. Gal. i. 4.; iii. 13. Titus ii. 14.

These and many similar passages shew, that, by the atoning blood of his Son, God redeemed his people to himself from the insupportable dominion and condemnation of the law, the ignominious servitude of sin and Satan, the corrupting influence and diversified sufferings of this present world, the power of death, and the wrath to come, which shall be the endless portion of the wicked after death. The partakers of his salvation are called to remember that they are not their own, for they are bought with a price; and they are represented as singing a new song to the exalted Lamb of God, saying, "Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals

thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation." 1 Cor. vi. 19, 20. Rev. v. 9.

It is readily admitted, however, that Christ is represented as giving himself a ransom for all,—tasting death for every man—taking away the sin of the world—and as being the propitiation, not for our sins only, but also for the sins of the whole world. 1 Tim. ii. 6. Heb. ii. 9. John i. 29. 1 John ii. 2. There can be no good reason for doing violence to the obvious meaning of these and similar texts, by limiting the extent of his atonement; as if he had made an exact compensation for every particular sin of every vessel of mercy, but nothing more; or as if he had not died for the world at large in any sense whatever. His atonement may be compared to the liquidation of a pecuniary debt; but it ought not to be confounded with it; as the nature of the satisfaction required by divine justice was entirely different. We have no authority in Scripture for believing that any thing less than perfect obedience, even unto the death of the cross, could have atoned for one transgression, or redeemed one sinner: and we may safely conclude, that a more excellent obedience, or a greater degree of suffering on the part of Christ, could not have been required to redeem any conceivable number. His atonement was intentionally made for the effectual redemption and salvation of his Father's chosen people; but in its own nature it was invaluable. What was necessary for one sinner, is sufficient for all the human race. Hence its benefits are freely proclaimed to all that hear the gospel; and unbelievers shall perish at last, not from any deficiency in the sacrifice of Christ, but because they persisted in rejecting it, and would not come to him that they might have life. Thus, by his vicarious redemption, the justice, mercy, and faithfulness of God, are manifested; a sure foundation is laid for the confidence of all who hear the proclamation of pardon; the despisers of his great salvation are rendered without excuse; and

those who believe are taught to consider themselves the purchased people of God, because he redeemed them to himself out of the hands of all their enemies, that they might serve him without fear.

3. *God regenerates his people, and creates them again for himself.* When the old creation was finished, its Author had the most perfect title to be the possessor of heaven and earth, because they were his own workmanship. By the early entrance of sin, the most important of his works here below were involved in darkness, confusion, and ruin. Mankind were rendered so blind and obstinate, polluted and depraved, as to be incapable of serving their Creator, or holding amicable intercourse with him. They are represented as by nature without strength, and dead in trespasses and sins. God makes the heirs of salvation his own, by delivering them from the ruins of the fall, and forming them anew by his mighty power. Various figurative terms are used, to show the greatness of that work which he accomplishes in them and for them. Of his own will they are begotten by the word of truth, and born again by the Spirit of regeneration. They are quickened from dead works, and raised up together with Christ. They are the workmanship of God, "created in Christ unto good works; for if any man be in Christ he is a new creature: old things are passed away, behold, all things are become new." They are furnished with new capacity for spiritual perception and activity, new views of divine things, and affections toward them, new principles and inclinations. They are prepared for serving God in a new and holy manner, as the object of their supreme love, and the end of their existence. Now, as he makes them a new creation, he justly claims a peculiar interest in them above the rest of mankind, saying, "This people have I formed for myself; they shall shew forth my praise," Isa. xliii. 21. Eph. ii. 5, 10.

4. *The people of God are betrothed to himself.* He became the husband of his ancient Israel, when he brought them out of the land of Egypt, and entered into covenant with them; but hey speedily

brake his covenant, and therefore he regarded them not. Jer. xxx. 32. As fallen creatures are incapable of holding fellowship with God, according to the nature of this near and endearing relation, on the ground of their obedience to his covenant of precepts, he promised to betroth the objects of his special favour unto himself, on the ground of his undeserved mercy, that they might be rendered his own for ever. He said, "I will betroth thee unto me for ever; yea, I will betroth thee unto me in righteousness, and in judgment, and in loving kindness, and in mercies. I will even betroth thee unto me in faithfulness, and thou shalt know the Lord. I will say to them who were not my people, thou art my people; and they shall say, thou art my God." Hosea ii. 19, 20, 23.

The divine mercy toward sinners is openly proclaimed in the gospel; their consent to become the Lord's, in opposition to every idol and rival, is earnestly solicited by his ministers; and all who cordially comply, are espoused as a chaste virgin to Christ. Their Maker is their husband; and, as the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, he rejoiceth over them as his own. 2 Cor. xi. 2. Isa. liv. 5.; lxii. 5.

5. *The people of God become his own by voluntary self-dedication.* As he claims a peculiar propriety in them, in distinction from the world, they are taught to consider themselves as no more their own, but his. Having obtained an interest in him as their reconciled God and everlasting portion, they give themselves back to him, by presenting their body a living sacrifice, and yielding their members as instruments of righteousness unto holiness, according to 2 Cor. viii. 5. Rom. xii. 1.; vi. 13, 19. This naturally leads us to the next thing proposed.

II. Let us therefore enquire, *in what respects God's spiritual Israel become his own.*

1. They become his people *openly, by the public profession of his name.* The ancient Israelites were his witnesses before the nations. He had solemnly avouched them to be his peculiar people, in the

presence of the Egyptians, by the wonders which were accomplished in their behalf; and they avouched him to be their God, and acknowledged their obligations to walk in his law, and keep his statutes. Deut. xxvi. 17, 18. Is. xliii. 8—12. The disciples of Jesus are, in like manner, taught to confess him before men, notwithstanding the malice of his adversaries, and the danger of being persecuted for his sake. He said, "Whosoever shall confess me before men, him shall the Son of man also confess before the angels of God. But he that denieth me before men, shall be denied before the angels of God." Luke xii. 8, 9. His Apostle said, "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." Rom. x. 9, 10.

Those who were converted to Christ by his apostles, did not conceal their connexion with him, nor attempt to enjoy the blessings of the gospel without confessing him before his enemies. When the awakened Jews gladly received his word of peace in Jerusalem, they were baptized and added to his church; and from that period they assembled steadfastly as brethren, to observe all the ordinances of the New Testament. Wherever the gospel was published with success, the infant disciples were uniformly united into churches, and trained to make an open profession of godliness, by following the example of the churches that were in Judea, and co-operating in the service of their Redeemer, as the living members of his mystical body. Having first given themselves to the Lord, they gave themselves to each other, and received one another as Christ also had received them. They were exhorted to hold fast the profession of faith, without wavering, by continuing to assemble for mutual edification on the first day of the week. None were recognised as christians in the early ages, except those who openly united in the profession and service of Christ; and those who relinquished their public profession,

or ceased from assembling to observe his institutions, were justly censured as apostates.

2. The people of God become his own *sincerely, with the full consent of their heart.* Under the appalling influence of outward judgments, and the impulse of slavish fear, the Israelites in the desert flattered him with their mouth, by making a good profession of faith and obedience when their heart was not right with him: therefore they soon became unsteadfast, and provoked him to destroy them. His spiritual people are not intimidated by the fear of avenging wrath, which produces only feigned subjection. Their minds are enlightened by the heavenly principles of the gospel, and sweetly persuaded by its expostulations, invitations, and promises. Their hearts have been softened and prepared to yield to the divine call. They know and believe the love, and the boundless liberty of God toward them; they are made willing to surrender themselves to him, on the ground of his diversified and irresistible claims; and they delight in accounting themselves no longer their own, to live to themselves, but his who redeemed them, to be the subjects of his government, and the objects of his paternal care. Ps. cx. 3. Rom. xiv. 8.

3. The people of God become his *exclusively, to the rejection of every other lord or rival, that would usurp his place in their mind.* They well understand his unquestionable right to be the only sovereign of their heart, on the ground of his matchless excellence as the infinite Jehovah, and on account of what he has done for them, what he is to them as their God, and what he will do for them without end. They understand also that he demands their sole allegiance, and that he will not give his glory to another; therefore they do not halt between two opinions, by attempting to serve him and mammon, or their worldly lusts. They admit that the inordinate love of any creature, is idolatry in his sight, even where no religious homage is intended; and they blush before him when they remember, that they "were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures." They

cheerfully forsake every object of unhallowed affection, saying, "O Lord our God, other lords beside thee have had dominion over us; but by thee only will we make mention of thy name. What have we to do any more with idols? Ashur shall not save us, neither will we say any more to the work of our hands, ye are our gods, for in thee the fatherless findeth mercy." Is. xxvi. 13. Hosea xiv. 3, 8.

It was in this resolute manner, that the primitive christians turned from their idols to God, and abandoned every criminal pursuit, that they might please him: and those in every age, who are made partakers of the same spirit, relinquish every ensnaring object of attachment, and give themselves to the Lord, to be his alone. 1 Thess. i. 9. Acts xix. 18—20. Luke xiv. 26, 33.

4. The people of God become *wholly and completely his.* Having received all that they are, and all things that they have, from his gracious hand, they withhold nothing from him, but present themselves entirely as a living sacrifice, which is their reasonable service. They yield up their body, with all their members, to be used as the instruments of righteousness, and desire him to take possession of them, and dwell in them as his abode. They yield up their souls, with all their intellectual and active powers, to remember his word, contemplate his excellence, trust in his promises, delight in his goodness, love him supremely, and live to his glory. They dedicate their particular talents of every kind, to be faithfully employed in promoting his interest among mankind. They give up their temporal substance and comforts, to be used with temperance, thankfulness, and liberality in doing good to others, according to his holy will. They devote their time and health to be spent in his service, and cheerfully consent to use all their influence among their fellow-creatures, in promoting the advancement of his spiritual kingdom, Rom. xii. 1, 2.

5. The people of God become his *practically and habitually.* They do not rest in empty speculations and good professions, nor give themselves up to sloth on account of the fervent piety and active zeal of

their former days; but having deliberately engaged their hearts to the Lord, they expect to be employed in his service, and eagerly enquire what he calls them to do. Instead of following the dictates of imagination or tradition, they daily consult the word of truth as their counsellor, and implore that wisdom which comes down from above, to direct them how they ought to walk so as to please God. They sincerely desire to detect their remaining faults, humbly acknowledge them, and strive to amend. They make it their care and delight to approve themselves before their heavenly Father, by resisting tempation, keeping their heart from evil, putting on the new man, observing divine ordinances with true devotion, edifying one another as brethren, and fulfilling the duties of their station, so as thereby to let their light shine before men, and do good unto all with whom they are connected.

6. The people of God become his *irrevocably for ever.* Being joined to the Lord by a perpetual covenant, their privileges are unalterably secured; their obligations to honour him still remain, and their inclination becomes more confirmed. Their goodness is not like the early dew, which rapidly disappears under a scorching sun. The seed of God abides and lives in them, and his Spirit continues to sanctify them for himself. As they grow in grace, and advance in experience, sin in every form becomes more hateful, and all its inward motions are more resolutely opposed. Their attachment to the work of the Redeemer becomes more ardent and powerful; they look back with shame and regret to the precious hours which they misspent, and the opportunities for doing good which they thoughtlessly neglected in their early days; they study to redeem their time by renewing their pious resolutions, laying aside every encumbrance, and performing every duty in its season with greater alacrity; they live to the glory of God, they are willing to die to him, and they desire to continue for ever his, beyond the region of death: Looking on their best performances during this mortal state, as mean and worthless,

when compared with the object of their love and the extent of their obligations, they long for the spotless perfection of the righteous in heaven, that they may serve him, like his holy angels, day and night, without any interruption or defect.

III. Let us now enquire, *for what purpose* God's spiritual Israel become his own, or *what they actually are to him* as his people.

1. They are *his vineyard, which he has separated from the world for himself.* His ancient people were thus represented in his own account of them: "My well-beloved hath a vineyard in a very fruitful hill. And he fenced it, and gathered out the stones thereof, and planted it with the choicest vine. For the vineyard of the Lord of hosts is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah his pleasant plant." Isa. v. 1—7. A similar representation of his people is given in the New Testament. An apostle, when addressing the members of a gospel church, said, "Ye are God's husbandry." Our Lord instructed his disciples by the use of a similar figure; "I am the true vine, my Father is the husbandman, and ye are the branches. He that abideth in me, and I him, the same bringeth forth much fruit, 1 Cor. iii. 9. John xv. 1—8.

As an extensive proprietor of land separates a particular spot for a garden, encloses it, and cultivates it with the greatest care, for his own immediate use; so has God set apart his people to bear fruit to himself, under his own peculiar care. He employs many labourers, of diversified talents, in planting and dressing his vineyard, but he superintends all their operations, and renders them effectual. It is the object of his incessant attention; he keeps it day and night, lest any hurt it; waters it every moment, prunes its branches, and makes them to yield good fruit. As the skill and industry of the husbandman are honoured in proportion as his labours are productive; God is honoured by his people, when they flourish before him to old age, and abound in all the fruits of righteousness, which are pleasing in his

sight. The culture bestowed on them is not in vain; the fruits of the Spirit with which they are adorned, distinguish them from the thorns of the neglected wilderness; and they are called trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that he might be glorified." Isa. xxvii. 2, 3.; lx. 21.; lxi. 3.

2. The people of God are *his flock*. "For he is our God, and we are the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand. It is he that made us, and not we ourselves; we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture." Ps. xcv. 7.; c. 3.

They are frequently represented as scattered and lost sheep, that have wandered far from their shepherd, and exposed themselves to perils which they know not how to escape. They had forsaken God, violated the proper bounds which he had appointed them, and gone astray in ways of their own choosing, where they were liable to be destroyed by the devouring lion of the desert, or the fury of the approaching tempest. They were too stupid and too obstinate to return to their rightful owner; and had they been left to themselves, they must inevitably have perished. God pitied his flock, when he beheld their scattered and helpless condition in the waste howling wilderness, and promised to gather them into his fold, and defend them, and raise up a faithful Shepherd to feed them. "Thus saith the Lord God, behold, I, even I, will both search my sheep and seek them out. As a shepherd seeketh out his flock, in the day that he is among his sheep that are scattered; so will I seek out my sheep, and will deliver them out of all places, where they have been scattered in the cloudy and dark day. And I will seek that which was lost, and bring again that which was driven away; and I will bind up that which was broken, and I will strengthen that which was sick; and I will set up one shepherd over them, and he shall feed them, even my servant David: he shall feed them, and he shall be their shepherd. I the Lord will be their God, and they shall dwell safely, and none shall make them afraid, Ezek. xxxiv. 11—13.

The good Shepherd whom God raised up according to his promises, was the Lord Jesus Christ the Son of David. He was sent into the wilderness of this world, to seek and save the lost; for their benefit he willingly laid down his life, that he might take it again, and accomplish all the merciful designs of his Father respecting them. He has undertaken to gather them all into his fold, from all places into which they have been scattered, to make them know his voice, and follow him in preference to others who would mislead them; and to feed them in the green pastures of his word and ordinances. He employs many under shepherds to feed them, and watch over them in his name; but his own unwearied care is extended to every one of them, and he is answerable to his Father for their ultimate safety. None can pluck them out of his hand, or scatter them a second time; and he has pledged his sure promise, that they shall never perish. He will keep them by his mighty power, gather them all into one countless flock, present them to the Father without blemish, give them eternal life, and feed them for ever by the living streams of paradise. See John x. 1—29. Acts xx. 28. Rev. vii. 9—17.

3. The people of God are *his living temple in which he dwells.* The tabernacle of Moses, and the temple of Solomon, in which he anciently dwelt among the Israelites, were appointed to be temporary figures of a more durable temple, composed of more precious materials, as the habitation of JEHOVAH. The foundation on which this superior temple rests, is chosen of God and precious, tried and sure, living and life-giving, namely, the Lord Jesus Christ, who is also its chief corner-stone. 1 Cor. iii. 11. Isa. xxviii. 16. 1 Peter ii. 6, 7.

The materials of which this living temple is composed, denote the disciples of Christ, who are compared to gold, silver, and precious stones. They are all joined to him by faith, as the foundation on which they rest, and from which they derive their life and stability, being builded together for an ha-

bitation of God through his Spirit. As God took possession of his ancient sanctuary, and filled it with his glory, so he now dwells in his spiritual temple, and walks in it, and manifests his glory in it. This temple shall continue to grow up, by the addition of suitable materials, till the last stone be placed on it with shouting; but it shall never be taken down by invading enemies, nor will the Lord ever forsake it; for thus it is written, "Ye are the temple of the living God, as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people." 2 Cor. vi. 16. Consult likewise 1 Cor. iii. 10—16. Eph. ii. 20—22. Isa. xxxiii. 20. Rev. xxi. 3, 4.

4. The people of God are *his priests that minister in his temple.* We have seen, that, when viewed collectively in their united capacity, they compose his living temple itself. It may now be observed, that, when viewed individually as sanctified persons, they are the priests who serve him therein. Hence it is said, "Ye are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ." 1 Peter ii. 5, 9.

As the Israelites were separated from the nations for the service of JEHOVAH, and dignified as a kingdom of priests, his chosen people, under the new covenant, are termed a royal priesthood, or kings and priests truly sanctified to shew forth his praises. The Levitical priests, who ministered in the earthly sanctuary, were a striking figure of those who compose the christian priesthood. They are all the spiritual descendants of Jesus Christ himself, who is the high priest of their profession; they are washed with pure water, adorned with the spotless robes of his righteousness, consecrated with his atoning blood, anointed with his holy Spirit, and honoured with free access to the Majesty on high. They have boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus. By faith in his intercession they daily present their prayers and praises, pecuniary contributions, and other appointed offerings, with divine acceptance. They partake of the provision of

God's house, and thereby enjoy delightful communion with himself. They have the cheering prospect of being delivered out of all their earthly tribulations, advanced to a state of undecaying personal perfection, and exalted to serve him before his throne in his heavenly temple, where they shall be for ever employed in offering up the incense of grateful praises, for their creation and redemption, regeneration and complete salvation. Heb. x. 19—22.; xiii. 15, 16. Rev. v. 8—14.; vii. 9—16.

5. The people of God are *his dear children.* They are made his children by regeneration, being "born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." They are delivered from their servile condition, according to their natural birth, and advanced to share all the privileges of adoption, by faith in his only begotten Son, who is the first-born among many brethren. John i. 12, 13. Gal. iii. 26.; iv. 4—7.

The sons and daughters of God, are the objects of his peculiar complacency and care. He imparts to them the spirit of adoption, instructs them in a manner becoming the dignity of his house, comforts them under all their trials, hears their requests, supplies their present need, allows them delightful fellowship with himself, and makes them the heirs of all that he has. Being thus admitted into his family, they love him with filial affection, and reverence him even when he reproves and chastens them. They pour out their sorrows and desires before him with confidence, crying, Abba, Father; they become followers of him, and honour him with cheerful obedience, they make the good of his household their chief concern, and promote the mutual attachment of its members by all the means in their power.

6. The people of God are *his heritage and portion.* Having graciously made over himself to them by covenant as their enriching portion, with the most wonderful condescension he accepts of them, notwithstanding their meanness and insignificance, as his portion, in distinction from the rest of his creatures. He

brought forth the Israelites out of the iron furnace of Egypt, that they might be to him for a people of inheritance; and when their inexcusable idolatry provoked him to punish them, their prophet made successful intercession in their behalf on this very ground, saying, "O Lord God, destroy not thy people, and thine inheritance, which thou hast redeemed through thy greatness; remember thy servants, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob: look not on the stubbornness of this people: yet they are thy people, and thine inheritance." When he was about to resign his charge as their leader, he taught them to remember how much the Lord had done to exalt them, and how very precious they were in his estimation; that they might be excited to love him supremely, and honour him with grateful steadfast obedience. He said, "The Lord's portion is his people: Jacob is the lot of his inheritance. He found him in a desert land, and in the waste howling wilderness: he led him about, he instructed him, he kept him as the apple of the eye." Deut. iv. 20.; ix. 25—29.; xxxii. 9, 10. Alluding to the same honourable distinction, the Psalmist said, "Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord; and the people whom he hath chosen for his own inheritance," Ps. xxxiii. 12. Similar language is used in many other passages, where the disciples of Jesus, including the converted Gentiles, are represented as the inheritance of the Lord. Ps. ii. 8. Zech. ii. 11, 12. Eph. i. 18.

Seeing the genuine people of God are his heritage and portion, he takes pleasure in them, as the objects of his unchangeable favour, and the subjects of his renewing grace. Unworthy as they are in their own estimation, he beholds with peculiar complacency their steadfast confidence in himself in the midst of their trials, their sincere love to his name, their fervent devotion, their active zeal for his service, and his holy image which adorns them. While they blush, and abase themselves in his presence, he commends and honours them before his angels. He prizes them as his royal diadem, and rejoices over them, as the bridegroom rejoices over the bride. His words strongly express the high regard that he

has for them, and the deep interest that he feels in their lasting welfare: "I will rejoice over them to do them good, and I will plant them in this land assuredly, with my whole heart, and with my whole soul. Thou shalt also be a crown of glory in the hand of the Lord, and a royal diadem in the hand of thy God. Thou shalt be called Hephzibah, and thy land Beulah: for the Lord delighteth in thee; and as the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, so shall thy God rejoice over thee. He will rejoice over thee with joy; he will rest in his love, he will joy over thee with singing." Jer. xxxii. 41. Isa. lxii. 3—5. Zeph. iii. 17.

The expressive language of these and similar passages, is verified, in an important sense, during this life: but as all the ransomed of the Lord shall in due time be raised from the dead, gathered into his presence, and made perfect in one, to behold his uncreated glory, reflect his celestial light, and love him with ever-growing affection through everlasting ages; his ineffable delight in them as his portion, and the various ways in which it shall be continually manifested by his rejoicing over them to do them good, are interesting secrets, which we may lawfully wish to comprehend, but which no mere creature can fully disclose.

1*st, This should fill our hearts with holy wonder at the condescension and love of God, in bringing such depraved despicable creatures into a new covenant with himself, and accepting them as his own.* "Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God!" Who were we, and what was our father's house, that we should have been brought so near to him as his priests? or regarded by him as his portion! Let us review all our baseness in the days of our ignorance, when we were his impotent enemies, and consider the state of endless misery to which he might justly have consigned us; and let us deliberately contrast both, with the state of adoption to which he has advanced us, and the bright prospect of celestial

glory which he has set before us; that our hearts may be suitably affected with admiration, joy, and gratitude.

2*d*, *The people of God are all precious and honourable in his sight, whatever their outward condition be in this world.* Their station may be obscure, and their temporal circumstances mean; they may be unknown or despised among men; but in the estimation of the Lord of all, they are the excellent of the earth, and of much higher importance than any who are at a distance from himself, how much soever they may be distinguished by earthly affluence and grandeur. He owns them all as his children; his angels do not disdain to minister to them; his Holy Spirit dwells in them as their comforter; his Son has the care of them; and when he shall appear on his throne of judgment, they shall appear with him in glory. They may feel the contempt and scorn of the proud, who are too blind and unbelieving to recognise or regard their relation to the Most High: but if their future destiny, at the manifestation of the sons of God, and the rank which they shall for ever sustain before his throne, be considered, they can have no adequate reason for being discouraged by the lowliness of their present state; neither can those who share the honours of time, assign any just cause for being ashamed of them.

3*d*, *As believers derive all their spiritual excellence and dignity from God alone, they have nothing of their own to glory in.* Therefore nothing could be more inconsistent with the possession of such honourable privileges, than self-conceit and boasting, haughtiness of deportment, or sanctimonious pride. The most eminent Scripture saints, were the most humble and unassuming. Our great Apostle recommended lowliness by his example, and cautioned every partaker of divine grace against being puffed up, by saying, "Who maketh thee to differ from another? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive? now, if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory as if thou hadst not received it?" The more deeply that the christian abases himself in his own eyes, the more

great and illustrious he appears in the sight of God and his angels.

4*th*, *The state of the people of God is happy and desirable, notwithstanding all the tribulations to which they are exposed during their pilgrimage.* The wicked are like dross which is thrown away, or stubble which is cast into the oven. They may prosper, and indulge their carnal lusts for a time; but, in the midst of their unhallowed joys, they are objects of God's righteous displeasure. Surely he has set them in slippery places: suddenly they shall be consumed with terrors, and cast down into destruction. If the trials and afflictions of the godly during this life be multiplied, their everlasting profit is thereby promoted. Their heavenly Father chastens them with paternal love, to make them partakers of his holiness, and prepare them for appearing with robes of triumph before his throne. They may well glory in tribulation, and meet all possible afflictions with unshaken fortitude, because he has promised to be with them when they pass through the waters and through the fire: he will comfort them, "as one whom his mother comforteth;" he will deliver them out of all adversity, and rejoice to do them good at the latter end.

5*th*, *This should excite those who call themselves the people of God, to prove the reality of their relation to him.* Many think themselves something, when they are nothing; and make their boast of God while they belong to the wicked one. The blind presumption of such persons, hinders them from receiving the gospel of reconciliation, and exposes them to aggravated disappointment, shame, and sorrow. The people of God may be known from the rest of mankind by the work of his Spirit in their hearts; and we should carefully examine whether we have obtained a place among them, that by the certain knowledge of our privileges, we may be comforted in times of trouble, and animated for our duty. Let us enquire therefore, whether we have experienced his regenerating and quickening power in our hearts, making us new creatures; whether we have been brought

near to him by the death and intercession of his Son, as the new and living way; whether we have cordially and frequently given ourselves back to God, to be his wholly, exclusively, and irrevocably; whether we have been implanted into Christ, made to abide in him, and bear the fruit of righteousness; whether we know the voice of Christ, and follow him, and feed in his green pastures; whether we have been separated from the world, made fellow-citizens with the saints, and joined to the household of God by the Spirit of love; whether we have been trained to honour him with scriptural, enlightened, and spiritual worship; whether it be our delight to follow him, cleave to him continually, and please him in all things, as dear children; in fine, let us enquire if God has been dealing with us as with sons, by chastening and humbling us, drawing forth our desires toward him, and fulfilling his word to us, granting us fellowship with himself, and making us partakers of his holiness.

6th, This subject demands immediate attention from those who are not the people of God. No wonder though such persons avoid the light of truth, and shrink from the discovery of their state; but it is evident, that those are not the people of God who remain ignorant of his true character, and alienated from him in their heart, who love this world, and conform themselves to it, or trust in their own righteousness, and dislike the way of acceptance by faith in Christ. Those who are destitute of the tokens of a gracious change, which have just now been mentioned, should take heed of flattering themselves, by imagining that, as they shun flagrant crimes, and observe a decent form of godliness, the root of the matter may possibly be in them, though only in a languid and dormant state. If you do not feel that your heart has been softened, reconciled to God, and renewed for his service by faith in Christ, you ought to conclude, without hesitation, that you are still far from him, in the gall of bitterness, and the bond of iniquity. Compare your deplorable state with the happy condition of the godly, reflect seri-

ously on the terrors of an approaching unavoidable judgment, and consider how little satisfaction the objects of your carnal affection will yield in the day of wrath. Remember that God is now addressing you as prisoners of hope, and calling you to seek him while he is to be found. He is still saying, "I will have mercy on her that had not obtained mercy: and I will say to them who were not my people, thou art my people; and they shall say, Thou art my God." Carefully study the parable of the prodigal, accept the encouragement which it affords to the guilty: and imitate his example, by turning immediately to God, with true penitence, in the full persuasion, that he is waiting to receive you, and to rejoice over your conversion. Luke xv.

7th, This subject is calculated to stir up the pure minds of the people of God, and prepare them for acting agreeably to the dignity of their new state. Let me persuade such persons to give all diligence to the full assurance of hope, in opposition to spiritual security and sloth. Daily draw near to God, as at the beginning, with renewed repentance and the prayer of faith. Frequently dedicate yourself wholly to him, according to the tenor of his covenant, that your sincerity in so doing may be confirmed, and your love increased. Having devoted your all to the Lord, remember that you are no more your own, but his, and act accordingly, while passing through the remaining changes of your pilgrimage. Submit in all things to his disposal, and cheerfully acknowledge his right to do whatsoever he pleases with his own. If dangers surround you, or if you be tried with temptation or affliction, still rejoice because you are the object of his unceasing care; he has promised to be with you in trouble, and none can pluck you out of his hand. Frequently enquire in what manner you ought to love, and worship, and honour him, who redeemed and formed you for himself to shew forth his praise. Keep in view, wherever you go, that you are the Lord's; and whatever others do, let it be your chief care so to live as that he may take pleasure in you.

PART FIFTH.

OF THE PLACE THAT JESUS CHRIST SUSTAINS IN THE NEW COVENANT.

SECTION I.—CHRIST IS THE MEDIATOR OF THE NEW COVENANT.

HEBREWS VIII. 6. *He is the Mediator of a better covenant.*

THE great Apostle of the Gentiles determined not to know any thing among them, "save Jesus Christ, and him crucified." We may conclude, from his enlightened and steadfast resolution, that no view of the gospel can be nearly correct, in which a very conspicuous and honourable place is not given to Jesus Christ. As all the invaluable blessings of the gospel, are comprehended in the new covenant, Christ must have an equally conspicuous place in it, concerning which it will be our duty now to enquire.

Having already considered the matter of which the new covenant consists, we may next proceed to contemplate the place which Christ sustains in it, which was the *fifth* thing proposed in our general plan. We are informed by the text, that he is the *Mediator* of it. In other passages, to be after considered, he is represented as the *messenger*, the *surety*, the *minister* or *administrator*, and even the *sum* and *substance* of the new covenant. All these will require our attention in their order, and the first of them will be sufficient to occupy the present discourse.

A mediator is a person who interposes between two parties, as a days-man or umpire, to restore or preserve harmony betwixt them. Here I shall attempt to shew,

First, Why a mediator between God and his Israel was necessary.

Second, That Jesus Christ is a fit and suitable Mediator.

Third, In what his office as a Mediator consists.

I. *Let us enquire why a mediator between God and his people was necessary.* This enquiry deserves our attention, because the interposition of a mediator was not necessary on account of the natural distance between God and them, considered as his creatures. We hear of no mediator between him and his holy angels that surround his throne; nor was there any occasion for a mediator between him and the parents of the human race, in their original state of innocence. He revealed himself to them in a direct and immediate way, and they had free access to him, as their approving Creator and chief joy. The covenant which God made with Noah and all the creatures that came out of the ark, required no mediator, because spiritual blessings were not promised in it, nor did it advance those with whom it was established, to a state of reconciliation with him. A mediator between him and his ancient Israel was found to be indispensably necessary, when the old covenant was made with them at Sinai; and the mediation of Moses prefigured that of Christ. We read of no mediator between God and Abraham, or Phinehas, or David, but the future mediation of Jesus Christ, was the principal thing referred to, and promised in the several covenants that he established with them.

As the new covenant consists of precious promises of all spiritual and eternal blessings, it could not be honourably made between the righteous JEHOVAH and his people, in their fallen state, without the interposition of a suitable mediator, for various important reasons, such as the following:—

1. A mediator between God and his people was necessary, because *they were all guilty before him, and liable to his just displeasure.* That all mankind are sinners, is an obvious but mournful truth, which none will deny, though many acknowledge their guilt in a general way, without laying its conse-

quences to heart. When our great Apostle was about to give a connected view of the gospel method of salvation, to the saints in Rome, he introduced his subject with a full account of the universal prevalence of sin, first, among the Gentile nations at large, and afterwards among the more enlightened Jews. He supported the alarming charge with various testimonies from the Old Testament, and brought it home to every conscience, by the following awakening conclusion: "We have proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin. Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. Therefore by the deeds of the law shall no flesh living be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin. All have sinned and come short of the glory of God."

Sin renders all who are chargeable with it, worthy of death in all its tremendous extent; and the wrath of God is revealed accordingly against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men. Hence, the honour of his equity and faithfulness, as the supreme Judge of the universe, required that satisfaction should be made for those who had exposed themselves to his just sentence of condemnation by their rebellion, before they could be admitted to enjoy the peculiar privileges of his family. The necessity of satisfaction has been generally dictated by the voice of conscience, and acknowledged by the sacrifices, of one kind or another, that have been almost universally offered for the purpose of appeasing the divine displeasure. The attention of the Israelites was directed to this subject, by the multiplicity of sacrifices for sin which were required by the law of Moses. But neither the victims that were spontaneously offered by the heathens according to the imagination of their own hearts, nor the divinely instituted sacrifices that were offered by the Levitical priesthood, could atone the offended justice of God, or restore the guilty to his favour. It was not possible in the nature of things,

that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sin. The worshippers who provided the sacrifices, and the priests that presented the blood of them before the Lord, were all deeply involved in guilt, and none of them could redeem his brother, nor do any thing to merit the salvation of his own soul. The honour of the divine government, and the necessity of justly condemned sinners, required the interposition of a mediator capable of appeasing that wrath which none could endure, and bringing in a perfect righteousness, that, on the ground of it, God might appear just in freely justifying those who had rendered themselves obnoxious to condemnation. The word which connected sin with deserved punishment, had gone out of his mouth, and could not be recalled or made void. His faithfulness could not be compromised. His anger, which he had denounced against transgressors, could not be turned away, nor could peace between him and them be restored by any other conceivable means. He could make no concession to them, as if his former demands and threats had been too rigorous; and they could neither fulfil his righteous demands, nor make any compensation for their transgressions. They stood in absolute need of a mediator, to do that in their behalf, which was above their own strength and worth. Rom. i. 18, 32.; iii. 9—26.

2. A mediator between God and his people was necessary, because *he had become an object of overwhelming dread to them.* As sin renders those who are chargeable with it, unclean and abominable in the sight of the Most High, his fiery indignation denounced against them on account of it, renders him an object of terror to the guilty, as soon as they begin to reflect seriously on their offences. Hence, our first parents had no sooner transgressed his law, and discovered their nakedness, than they fled, and vainly attempted to hide themselves from his presence. For the same reason, the heathen did not like to retain the true God in their knowledge, but changed his glory into images of earthly objects, according to their depraved imagination; that they

might combine the rites of their religion and the indulgence of their wicked lusts, without the restraint of conviction or fear. Under the influence of the same pernicious principle, many who have access to the light of revealed truth contrive either to forget God, or to misrepresent his character; as if he were so far exalted above them, as to disregard their conduct, or so exclusively tender and merciful as to be incapable of inflicting punishment. While men continue either so blind as to deny, or so hardened as to despise his holiness and righteousness, they cannot possibly return to the enjoyment of his favour. They may indeed be pleased with a god of their own framing, they may worship the idol of their deceived imagination; but whether they adore the work of their hands, or the false representation of God which they have framed in their minds, they are still idolaters, and still without the true God in the world. Let such persons be instructed concerning the adorable perfections of JEHOVAH, as they are revealed in the Scriptures; inform them how righteous and holy he is, that he demands their supreme love and constant obedience, that he is their ever present witness, beholding the secrets of their hearts, and that he will render impartial judgment to every man according to his works:—let these things be explained, proved, and inculcated on their minds with perseverance; and, as soon as they begin to understand and believe that he observes, and hates, and punishes sin, their conscious guilt will produce insupportable dread of him. They will perceive their inability to answer for their thoughts and ways, or stand in his awful presence. They will remember with how little reverence they formerly addressed him, and with what presumptuous self-complacency they uttered their formal prayers, in the days of their thoughtless ignorance; but in proportion as their attention is directed toward his infinite majesty and immaculate purity, they will find that they cannot lift up their eyes before his throne, that their mouth is shut, their heart overwhelmed with terror, and the interposition of a suit-

able mediator is indispensably requisite to bring them near his throne with acceptance, and embolden them to present their requests.

When the old covenant was proclaimed to the Israelites, they were deeply affected with their need of one to mediate between them and God, and free their minds from the slavish fear of being consumed by the fire of his jealousy: "All the people saw the thunderings, and the lightnings, and the noise of the trumpet, and the mountain smoking: and when the people saw it, they removed, and stood afar off. And they said unto Moses, Speak thou with us, and we will hear: but let not God speak with us, lest we die." Exod. xx. 18, 19. Deut. v. 23—31.

The same necessity was felt by Job, though he was the most upright and perfect man of the age in which he lived. In the period of his great affliction, when every earthly comfort failed, and his censorious friends added to his distress, he desired to plead his cause before God; but when he reflected on the incomprehensibility of his nature, the works of his mighty power, the sovereignty of his dominion, and the inflexibility of his justice, he trembled to draw near before his Judge, on account of his conscious filthiness and insignificance, and earnestly longed for the interposition of a competent days-man, to bring him nigh with acceptance by laying his hand on both parties. Under the greatest agitation of mind, he said, "How shall I answer him, and choose out my words to reason with him? For he is not a man as I am, that I should answer him, and we should come together in judgment. Neither is there any days-man betwixt us, that might lay his hand upon us both," Job ix. 14, 32, 33. The whole chapter, and many other passages of his book, contain very affecting sentiments on the same subject. Now, if the intervention of a mediator was found necessary to give Job boldness and liberty of utterance before God, notwithstanding his approved and singular integrity, it must be admitted that none of the human race can safely approach him on the

ground of their personal worth. Those who approach his throne on the ground of their own righteousness, necessarily offend him by their presumption; and all who know the extent of their guilt, dread the Most High, and flee from him as a consuming fire, deeply sensible that they can have no comfortable intercourse with a Being so great and holy, till they be introduced by one more worthy to appear before him, who can secure their safety, and furnish them with confidence.

3. A mediator between God and his people was necessary, because *they were alienated from him, and in a state of positive enmity.* As God is justly displeased with sinners, they are strongly disaffected toward him. None can deny this, without manifesting culpable ignorance of their own heart, and contradicting the testimony of the Holy Ghost, which shews, that they are estranged from the womb, alienated from the life of God, enemies in their mind, and even enmity in the abstract. Ps. lviii. 3, 4. Eph. iv. 18. Rom. viii. 7.

Those who are so entirely careless, as to live without serious reflection about eternal things,—and likewise self-righteous persons, who flatter themselves in their own eyes,—may have no distinct perception of their latent disaffection to their Creator; but the blindness of their conscience can be no evidence that it does not exist. Profane and dissipated persons, who openly indulge their lusts, and take the name of God in vain, have been known to boast of the goodness of their hearts; yet their wilful transgressions, and the word of truth, concur in marking them his enemies. Ps. cxxxix. 19—22. Saul of Tarsus accounted himself blameless according to the law, while he persecuted Christ, and breathed out slaughter against his disciples; but when its commandments were brought home to his mind with power, his formerly latent corruption was revived, and he discovered that he was dead in sin. Rom. vii. 7—11.

The same effects are produced, when the perfect law is applied to the hearts and consciences of others.

They attempt to love God supremely according to his command, and thereby discover that they are entirely destitute of sincere love to him. Their heart is alienated from him by ignorance of the amiableness of his character, and dark unworthy apprehensions of his government. The little that they do know of him, shews the direct contrariety of his holiness to their prevailing carnality, and consequently heightens their dislike. Their enmity is exasperated by the extensive demands and strict prohibitions of his law, his cutting reproofs, and the awful threats which he has denounced on account of sin. They murmur against him in secret, as a tyrannical ruler, and a vindictive judge. They know that they cannot conceal themselves from his all-seeing eye, nor resist his avenging arm: they understand that it would be highly advantageous for themselves to love him as ardently as he has required; a natural regard for their own interest makes them strive to suppress their enmity, and give him their heart; yet they feel that they cannot love him, they feel that they hate him, and when they think of his presence which continually surrounds them, and his holiness which is contrary to their depraved nature, his indignation against sin, and his determination to punish the impenitent with everlasting destruction, they hate him the more.

The hostile state of their mind, renders the interposition of a mediator to treat with them in behalf of God, for the purpose of subduing their animosity and reconciling them to him, as necessary on their account, as it was necessary on his account to atone his justice, and maintain the honour of his dominion and faithfulness. Their harsh and gloomy apprehensions of God required to be removed, by the clear manifestation of his amiableness, and the beauty of his holiness. The reasonableness of all the demands of his law, and the equity of his threats denounced against disobedience, stood in need of some practical exhibition, to shew that they did not proceed from any arbitrary severity of nature, or from malevolence toward the work of his hands.

As their inveterate enmity against him could not be removed by any display of mere authority, or displeasure, or even righteousness, on his part; there was the most urgent necessity for some signal display of the mercy and love of God, calculated at once to soften the obdurate hearts of the guilty, fill them with shame and self-loathing on account of their groundless disaffection to him; and sweetly dispose them to think favourably of his character, to acquiesce in his government, delight in his goodness, and love him in return for his undeserved preventing kindness.

It was necessary that a mediator should give a fair and encouraging representation of God, adapted to remove the prejudices and engage the affections of men, by shewing that the demands of his justice were fully satisfied, that his anger was turned away, and that he is willing to be reconciled with his rebellious creatures. Affectionate and pressing expostulations, invitations, and promises, were all suitable for this purpose; and as the enmity of the human heart against God was deeply rooted and confirmed by habit, the continued interposition of a mediator was required, that it might be completely eradicated, and that unalterable peace between him and his people might be established.

If the reasons which have been assigned for the interposition of a mediator betwixt God and his people, in the making of the new covenant, be admitted, the office will appear peculiarly arduous and difficult. It will then be allowed that none could successfully undertake it without possessing the capacity and power of fulfilling all the comprehensive demands of the law of God, atoning his justice, appeasing his anger on account of sin, redeeming the guilty from everlasting condemnation, inspiring them with confidence to approach the Majesty of heaven, and changing their criminal alienation into enlightened love. No mere creature of the most exalted order was found adequate for such an undertaking. Among all the inhabitants of heaven and earth only one person was found suitably qualified, and

we are accordingly informed, that, as there is one God, there is only "one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus," 1 Tim. ii. 5.

II. Our attention is therefore next called to *the peculiar fitness and suitableness of Jesus Christ for sustaining this important and honourable office.* As his excellence far surpasses human thought, it would be grossly presumptuous for any to pretend to enumerate all the peculiar qualifications by which he is distinguished; but the following simple observations may serve as a specimen of what might be advanced on this subject.

1. Jesus Christ is a suitable Mediator between God and men, because *he is a partaker of the nature of both.* With respect to his divine nature, we are informed, that he existed with the Father in the beginning, even from everlasting, before the world was made; and being in the form of God, he thought it not robbery to be equal with God, as the Creator and Preserver, the Lord and End of all. The peculiar names and titles of God are given to him in the most unequivocal manner. He is frequently represented as possessing the incommunicable attributes, and performing the mighty works of JEHOVAH. He is entitled to the highest religious homage, as the only begotten Son of God; and all men are required to honour him, even as they honour the Father. In a word, the doctrine of his Godhead, is set before us in scripture in a great variety of forms, and with all the clearness and force of evidence that could reasonably be desired; but the testimonies which bear on this momentous subject are so numerous, that only a few of them can be specified in this place. John i. 1—4.; v. 17—29. Phil. ii. 6. Heb. i. Rev. v. 8—13.

As those in behalf of whom the Son of God was about to interpose with his Father, were partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same, by assuming their nature into a personal union with his own divine nature; being made of the seed of David according to the flesh,

and born of the virgin Mary, by the miraculous influence of the Holy Ghost. Being both God and man united, he is called EMMANUEL, which is God with us. Thus, the Word was made flesh; the Son of God became the son of man; having in himself at once all the adorable perfections of God, and also all the bodily members, all the intellectual powers, and all the innocent feelings of man. He and the people of God are all of one, for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren. John i. 14. Matt. i. 18—25. Heb. ii. 11—16.

As the divine and human natures are intimately and inseparably united in the matchless person of Christ, and he is equally related to God and to those who were about to be brought into covenant with him, no one else could be so suitable as a mediator, to bring them nigh to each other, and accomplish their reconciliation.

2. Christ is a fit Mediator between God and men, because *he is perfectly qualified, and sincerely disposed, to promote the true interest of both parties.* Being the only begotten Son of God, he has ineffable love to his Father, and the most ardent zeal for the advancement of his glory. Being also the son of man, he regards his brethren with inconceivable tenderness, and desire to promote their salvation. He has a perfect knowledge of the infinite majesty of God, the extensive demands of his law, and the amount of satisfaction required by his justice on account of the transgressions of men. He is equally acquainted with the complicated guilt, the wicked propensities, and the pernicious habits of fallen men; together with the blindness of their minds, the temptations which beset them, the future punishment to which they are exposed, the diversified circumstances of all God's chosen people, and all the means necessary to advance them to a state of acceptance in his presence. He has unerring wisdom to direct him in approaching God, and negotiating with him in behalf of guilty men; and also in treating with them in behalf of God, for the purpose of humbling them for their

rebellion, and effectually persuading them to be reconciled to him. Being holy and harmless, with the divine law in his heart, he was capable, as a man, of honouring all his Father's commands, and suffering even unto death as the substitute of transgressors. His divine nature was able to support his humanity under its unspeakable load of suffering, and give infinite value to his spotless obedience, and render his death an atonement fully adequate to satisfy the justice, and appease the wrath, of the offended Creator. He is full of enlightening and sanctifying grace: and consequently able to render his word effectual in the hearts of sinners, by giving them unfeigned repentance, opening their understanding to comprehend the way of reconciliation, and making them willing to embrace it. In short, he is true and faithful, ever mindful of all that belongs to his important office, worthy of the entire confidence of both parties, and incapable of ever disappointing it.

3. Christ is a suitable Mediator, as *he has competent authority to interpose between God and men for their reconciliation.* Every mediator must be employed by one or both of the parties who are at variance, before he be entitled to interpose his authority as their umpire. When the Israelites felt that they were incapable of treating with God in an immediate manner, they desired Moses to become their mediator; and their request was approved by God, who invested him with the high authority requisite for that office. In like manner, Jesus Christ glorified not himself, by obtruding himself into his office without being duly called thereto. The right of admitting and appointing a mediator belonged exclusively to God, because he was both the supreme Ruler of his creatures, and the justly-offended party. Accordingly, he sent his Son into the world, called him in righteousness to his important undertaking, and gave him a commission to perform all things belonging to his complex office. It was on the ground of his divine commission that he treated with sinners in the name of his Father, du-

ring the days of his humiliation, by teaching them, reproving them, commanding them to repent, and inviting them to trust in his pardoning mercy. It was on the same ground that he afterwards approached to minister in their behalf before God, for the purpose of turning away his anger, and recommending them to his favour. John xii. 49, 50. Heb. v. 4—10.

The right of appointing a mediator did not belong to men, because, as his creatures, they were altogether inferior to God by nature—he had an absolute title to dispose of them according to his good pleasure—and, being guilty before him, their mouth was stopped; they had no plea that they could offer to recommend them, no apology that could vindicate them, and no personal merit that could support the lowest claim to the divine favour: The whole appointment, therefore, depended on the sovereign will and pure mercy of God. But though it was from the Father alone that Jesus received authority to interpose between him and his rebellious creatures, it is nevertheless necessary, that those who desire the benefit of his mediation, give their personal assent and consent to the commission which he received, by directly employing him to treat in their behalf with God, and implicitly submitting to all that he addresses to them in his Father's name. No lasting benefit can be derived from his office by obstinate transgressors, who despise his atoning blood, and reject his sacred message; but all the chosen people of God are graciously brought to acquiesce in his wise appointment. They cordially approve the person, and accept the mediation of Christ; they relinquish every other ground of confidence, and commit their difficult cause into his hand; they draw near the throne of the Father through him, as their new and living way, and ascertain its suitableness by joyful experience.

III. Let us now consider more particularly, *in what Christ's office as a Mediator consists.* The mediation of Christ, in its most general and extensive

import, includes his whole work as the Redeemer and Saviour of sinners; or, their prophet, priest, and king: But in its more restricted signification, it denotes his special interposition between God and his people, for the purpose of ratifying and establishing the new covenant between them. To avoid anticipating what will afterwards come before us in a subsequent discourse, we may confine our present attention to the latter and more limited view of the subject.

As Moses was the mediator of the old covenant, and his ministry prefigured the mediation of Christ, we may be assisted in forming just views of the latter, by comparing it with the former, and observing those instances of correspondence between the one and the other, which have been marked by the sacred writers.

1. *Moses ratified and dedicated the covenant of which he was the mediator, with blood which was shed for that purpose.* The solemn transaction is recorded in the following words: "And Moses wrote all the words of the Lord, and rose up early in the morning, and builded an altar under the hill, and twelve pillars, according to the twelve tribes of Israel. And he sent young men of the children of Israel, who offered burnt-offerings, and sacrificed peace-offerings of oxen unto the Lord. And Moses took half the blood, and put it in basons; and half of the blood he sprinkled. And he took the book of the covenant, and read in the audience of the people: and they said, All that the Lord hath said, we will do, and be obedient. And Moses took the blood, and sprinkled it on the people, and said, Behold the blood of the covenant, which the Lord hath made with you concerning all these words," Exod. xxiv. 4—8. The figurative signification of these rites is explained in Heb. ix. 13—23. The common English version of this passage, has led many to misrepresent its meaning, by confounding the divine covenants with a latter-will for conveying temporal goods. Jesus Christ has been represented as a testator, disponing or bequeathing all his saving

benefits, as so many legacies, to perishing sinners, who, according to this scheme, are denominated his legatees. It is added, that having made his latter-will in favour of guilty men, he died to confirm it, and afterwards rose from the dead, that he might become the executor of it. This apparently pious theory has no adequate foundation in the word of truth. The same word is rendered by testament in the passage last quoted, which is used in Heb. viii. 6—10. and rendered by covenant; nor is there any good reason for departing from the use of the latter term, where the same original word occurs. A testament or latter-will does not require any mediator, neither does the nature of it at all correspond with that of either the old covenant or the new. The word testator in the passage referred to, which has misled many a serious reader, has no corresponding term in the inspired text. Judicious critics, who have bestowed particular attention on this subject, agree that διαθεμενος denotes, not testator, but *that by which it is confirmed.* The following version by Dr Boothroyd, deserves to be quoted here, as both accurate and intelligible: "And for this purpose he is the Mediator of the new covenant, that by means of death for the redemption of the transgressions under the first covenant, those who are called might receive the promise of the everlasting inheritance. For where a covenant is, there must also of necessity be the death of that which establisheth it: For a covenant is made firm over the dead victims; whereas it is of no force while that which establisheth it liveth. Wherefore neither was the first covenant confirmed without blood. For when Moses had spoken every precept of the law to all the people, he took the blood of calves and goats, with water and scarlet wool, and hyssop, and also the book, and sprinkled all the people, saying, *This is the blood of the covenant* which God hath enjoined unto you."

Covenants were anciently confirmed by the death of some purifying victim, as we have already observed; therefore, as the blood of calves and goats

could not take away sin, nor purge the conscience of the guilty, Jesus, the Mediator of the new covenant, fulfilled what Moses had only prefigured. Through the eternal Spirit *he offered himself a sacrifice* without spot to God, that he might completely atone his justice, redeem transgressors from deserved condemnation, purge their conscience from dead works to serve the living God, and ratify a new covenant with them by his own blood. His blood which was shed at his death, is termed *the blood of the new and everlasting covenant*, because he confirmed and established it for ever, by laying down his life a ransom for many. It is called the blood of sprinkling, in allusion to the sprinkling of the blood with which Moses confirmed the old covenant. The sprinkling of the blood of Jesus denotes the offering up of it to God as the appointed atonement for sin, and the effectual application of it to the conscience of them who are called to salvation, when the covenant is established with them as the heirs of it. Consult also Matt. xxvi. 28. Heb. xiii. 20.; xii. 24.

2. *Moses approached the immediate presence of God as a mediator, to receive his message, and communicate it to the people in his name.* He was called up into the mount to receive the tables of the covenant, and all the laws and ordinances which were added to it, while the people were commanded to remain at a distance. He went up accordingly into the midst of the cloud, "and gat him up into the mount; and Moses was in the mount forty days and forty nights." Having received a complete system of statutes and ordinances, adapted to the nature of the old covenant, he imparted them to the people in the name of their God, and directed them to reduce the whole to practice, by rearing the tabernacle, and performing all things that had been enjoined, Exod. xxiv. 12—18.: xxv. to xxxi.; xxxiv. to xl.

In like manner, after Jesus Christ was anointed for his important work by the Holy Ghost, he was

led into the wilderness, where he continued in a state of abstinence during forty days and forty nights. His temptations, which have been recorded, seem to have taken place chiefly at the close of that period, when he felt that sensation of hunger on which the first of them was grounded. As he frequently ascribed all his doctrine to the Father who had sent him, we have reason to believe, that he was employed, during the principal part of his seclusion from the society of mortals, in receiving and digesting the divine message. When God had put words in his mouth, he appeared among the people as a public teacher, and published what had been committed to him, in his Father's name, Matt. iv. 1—3. John v. 30, 43.

After he had ratified the covenant with his blood, he arose from the dead, and ascended to the celestial presence of his Father, that he might receive the gift of the Holy Ghost, together with various additional communications of his will, and impart the whole to his disciples. He disclosed many things to his apostles by the illuminating influence of his Spirit, which their prejudices had rendered them incapable of bearing during the time of his personal ministry, and enabled them to reveal the whole of his doctrines and laws to the people. Hence, the last of the apostolic books is called "the Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him to shew unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass; and he sent and signified it by his angel to his servant John, who bare record of the word of God." By its contents we hear him commending and censuring, promising and threatening, expostulating and encouraging, warning and comforting men in the Father's name, Rev. ii. iii.

3. *Moses made intercession with God in behalf of the Israelites, as their mediator.* While he tarried in the mount receiving the message of God, and the instructions necessary for the making of the tabernacle, they became impatient on account of his protracted absence, and formed a golden calf to conduct them to the land of promise. They raised an altar

before it, honoured it with a feast, worshipped the work of their own hands, and thereby, in the most flagrant and inexcusable manner, violated the first and second precepts of the covenant that had been so solemnly made with them. In the midst of their festivity, God informed Moses of their idolatry, and said, "I have seen this people, and behold, it is a stiff-necked people. Now, therefore, let me alone, that my wrath may wax hot against them, and that I may consume them: and I will make of thee a great nation." Exod. xxxii. 1—10.

If the Lord had intended to consume them, he could easily have done so in a moment, without discovering his design to any of his creatures; but by condescending to say, "LET ME ALONE, *that my wrath may wax hot* against them," his intention evidently was, to excite and encourage their mediator to interpose in their behalf, without delay, as an intercessor, for the purpose of turning away his deserved wrath and making up the breach. Moses understood the gracious intimation, and instantly besought the Lord to spare his offending people, and expostulated with him, in their behalf, on the ground of his covenant of promise that he had made with their father Abraham. At his seasonable request, the Lord repented him of the evil that he had thought to do unto them. Moses next went down from the Lord to the people, destroyed their idol, reproved them for their unsteadfastness, and called the Levites to inflict a certain extent of punishment, for the purpose of promoting general repentance among their brethren. He then returned to the Lord, and renewed his intercession in the most disinterested and importunate manner, until he obtained a favourable answer. See the whole of Exod. xxxii. xxxiii.

The transgressions of God's spiritual Israel, are far more complicated and heinous than those of the ancient tribes, and calculated to draw down his fiery indignation upon them; but Jesus interposes seasonably in their behalf, as an interceding Mediator. In the hour of his greatest personal suffering he prayed for his enemies and murderers, saying, "Father,

forgive them; for they know not what they do." The prayer that he offered up after instituting the perpetual memorial of his death, shews that he makes intercession for all that believe in him, and what blessings he solicits on their behalf. Luke xxiii. 34. John xvii.

As he died that he might thereby ratify God's new covenant with all his people, he lives to make them partakers of all its benefits. When any of them commit sin, he interposes with his Father, on the ground of his propitiation, for pardoning mercy, and renewing grace to help them in time of need. Having been reconciled to God by his death, they shall be preserved from wrath, and completely saved by his life. He knows all their temptations, and is touched with a feeling of their infirmities. He maintains their peace with the Father, and grants them constant access into the holiest through himself, as the new and only living way of acceptable intercourse between God and men. Believing in his reconciling blood and continual intercession, they are emboldened to approach the sacred throne, and present their own humble supplications in his name, in the confidence, that if they ask any thing according to the will of God, he will fulfil their request. The guilty and the tempted, are frequently directed to look up to the exalted Redeemer, as an interceding Mediator; and come boldly to the throne of grace through him. Hence it is said, "If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them." 1 John ii. 1, 2. Heb. vii. 25. Rom. v. 8—10.; viii. 33, 34.

1*st*, *This shews why our God is still represented as a consuming fire.* When the old covenant was proclaimed from Sinai, "the sight of the glory of the Lord was like devouring fire on the top of the mount, in the eyes of the children of Israel." The terrific appearance which they witnessed, was in-

tended to impress their hearts with his infinite majesty and holiness, the inflexibility of his justice, and his unalterable detestation of sin; that they might be taught to fear him and humble themselves in his presence, to seek the interposition of a mediator, and keep his commands for ever. Those who avail themselves of the mediation of Christ, are saved from the fiery indignation of the Almighty, by his pacifying blood, and encouraged to draw near to the throne of grace by his celestial intercession; but nothing that he did or suffered, was intended to make men think lightly of the authority of God, or give them the least encouragement to continue in sin with the hope of impunity. The very affecting manner in which he ratified the new covenant, shews, that God is as holy and just, that his authority is as sacred, and his wrath as tremendous, that reverence and godly fear are as necessary, and the destruction of impenitent sinners as certain, as when Sinai trembled at his presence, and the fire of his jealousy consumed the offending Israelites. Sin is as contrary to the divine nature now, as when the awful curses of the law were denounced against it by Moses; and as God spared not his own Son when he appeared before the throne of justice as the substitute of the guilty, we may rest assured, that he will spare none who despise his son, or turn the gospel of his grace into licentiousness. The blood of the new covenant is sufficient to cleanse the most polluted, who repent and believe in it; but those who abuse the present dispensation of mercy and long-suffering, shall find it "a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." His unmitigated wrath shall burn against them with greater fury, than if no possible way of reconciliation had ever been proposed to them.

2*d*, *This should deter the guilty from presuming to approach an absolute God, without the interposition of a mediator.* Moses was commanded to set bounds about Sinai, to keep the Israelites at a becoming distance; and if any of them had gone beyond the appointed limits to touch the mount, or gaze on the

thick cloud which covered it, their temerity would have provoked instant destruction. When they beheld the distant glory of the Lord, and heard his appalling voice, their hearts were filled with terror, they fled from his presence, and intreated that his word should not be spoken to them any more. Guilty creatures cannot stand before the holy and righteous God, and it is in consequence of gross ignorance and hardness of heart, that any of them ever make the daring attempt. All are chargeable with presumption who trust in their own righteousness, as the only, or even the partial ground of their acceptance; or who offer up their prayers to God in a rash irreverent manner, without fixing their attention on the mediation of Christ, and drawing near by him as the living way. Such worshippers provoke the jealousy of the Highest, by treating him as if he were neither great nor righteous, but like the idols of the heathen, and capable of conniving with sinners.

3*d*, *This shews the folly and danger of trusting or employing any other mediator except the only one whom God has appointed.* Fellow christians may lawfully ask a special interest in the prayers of each other, because every believer is commanded to offer up "supplication for all saints," and the Lord has promised to hear and answer their united addresses. Such brotherly intercession does not in any degree detract from the honour of Christ's mediation, being presented to the Father through him alone, without the least dependance on human merit. The holy angels, and the spirits of the just made perfect, are not appointed to make intercession in behalf of mortals, neither are christians directed to ask the benefit of their friendly interposition. They cannot be present in many different places at the same time, to attend to the diversified addresses of men scattered over the earth; we have no satisfactory evidence that they have any knowledge of the supplications which are presented to them, nor the least reason to believe that they comply with the ignorant solicitation of those superstitious worship-

pers who implore the aid of their prayers. Jesus alone is the propitiation for the sins of men, and the only celestial Intercessor whom the Father has honoured as the medium of his gracious communications. He has the most ample knowledge of all the temptations and necessities of those who trust in him. He is ever ready to make effectual intercession for all that come unto God by him, and ever able and willing to save them. Those who desire to approach God, have not the least occasion for any other mediator to introduce them; therefore all those who pray to departed saints or angels, or trust in their interposition with the Almighty, are guilty of despising the mediation of Christ, and dishonouring the Hearer of prayer, by impious will-worship, which he will not fail to punish.

4*th*, *The Mediator of the new covenant has the highest claim to our superlative regard.* He is the only begotten Son and the equal of the Father; the object of his unqualified commendation and ineffable delight. He has every conceivable excellence in the utmost perfection, without any defect or blemish. In him all the glorious attributes of the Deity, and all the amiable affections of humanity, are happily united. The office which he sustains is of matchless importance in itself, and infinitely beneficial to fallen men. He finished a difficult undertaking in the days of his flesh, of which no other person in heaven or earth was capable; and he is still employed in accomplishing the purposes of infinite wisdom and mercy, for the benefit of all that trust in him. The condescension and love which he manifested in humbling himself as the substitute of transgressors, can never be fully comprehended or sufficiently admired; and notwithstanding his present exaltation on the throne of God, he remembers the least of his disciples with tender regard, and successfully pleads their cause with his Father in the presence of all the heavenly host. We find it easy to esteem and love the most deserving of our fellow-creatures, yet our nearest relatives and most faithful friends, have no claim to our regard that can bear to be com-

pared with his. We may love them to excess, and thereby become guilty of spiritual idolatry; but we cannot offend God or provoke his jealousy by the ardour of our love to his Son; for in proportion as we honour him, we honour and please the Father.

5*th*, *By virtue of the mediation of Christ, the most guilty and timid may approach the righteous and awful Majesty of heaven with boldness and acceptance.* When awakened sinners discover the extent of their guilt, the depravity of their heart, and their extreme baseness in the sight of their holy Creator, they feel that they cannot safely approach his sacred presence on the ground of their good works or strictest religious performances, because all these are wholly polluted with sin more than sufficient to condemn them. It sometimes happens, when such persons prostrate themselves for the purpose of secret prayer, that shame covers them, slavish fear seals their lips, they have no power to present their petitions, nor can they so much as lift up their eyes to heaven. The mediation of Christ is the only effectual source of relief for those who are depressed by a spirit of bondage. It meets all the righteous demands of God, and renders it perfectly consistent with his honour to hold friendly intercourse with men. It invites the approach of those who have nothing of their own to recommend them, frees them from the danger of presumption, and inspires them with confidence to draw near to the throne of grace, and fill their mouth with arguments. The Lord has respect to those who come before him in this new and honourable way of his own appointment: he accepts their persons, yields to their importunate solicitation, and grants them the high honour of prevailing with himself, as Jacob did when he wrestled with the angel.

6*th*, *This should excite believers to draw near daily to the Father, through his Son, with filial reverence and confidence, love and joy.* They are called to pray without ceasing, with frequency and perseverance, and to abound in all the other parts of divine worship: but God desires to be worshipped in spirit

and in truth, nor will we accept an empty form even from his own children. They have need therefore to look closely to the state of their heart, and to watch against any thing like thoughtlessness and lukewarmness, or such unbecoming familiarity in addressing the Most High, as results rather from the force of custom, than from the power of faith. If they suffer his word to slip out of their mind, and come before him in a formal irreverent manner, or if they trust in their own religious attainments, and forget that their only way of access is by Jesus Christ, all the devotional services in which they engage, will be rendered worthless and abominable. Let us therefore keep our attention steadfastly fixed on his mediation, as the only ground of our intercourse with the Father, and draw near with a true heart, in the full assurance of faith, that our languid affections may be powerfully excited, and our requests presented with joyful acceptance. Eph. ii. 18.; iii. 12, 14. Heb. x. 19—22.

7th, The manner in which guilty men are reconciled to God by the mediation of Christ, should excite us to strive resolutely against sin, and follow universal holiness. He did not suffer in the room of the guilty, to procure for them the privilege of committing sin with impunity, but to redeem them from all iniquity, that they might be zealous of good works, agreeably to the promise of the covenant which he ratified for them with his blood. His atonement did not diminish the intrinsic evil of sin. It is still hateful in the sight of God, and as opposite to his nature as ever. None who love sin, can love God at the same time, nor can those who live in the wilful practice of it, have any fellowship with him. Therefore those whom he has restored to the enjoyment of his favour by the death of his Son, ought to shew the sincerity of their gratitude, by loving what he loves, hating what he hates, avoiding what would displease him, and making it their delight to walk with him in holy obedience, becoming those who have his law written in their heart.

PART FIFTH.

OF THE PLACE THAT JESUS CHRIST SUSTAINS IN THE NEW COVENANT.

SECTION II.—CHRIST IS THE MESSENGER OF THE NEW COVENANT.

MALACHI III. 1. *The Messenger of the covenant shall come, saith the Lord of hosts.*
HEBREWS VII. 22. *By so much was Jesus made a Surety of a better covenant.*
HEBREWS VIII. 6. *But now hath he obtained a more excellent ministry.*

EACH of these texts contains abundant matter for a separate discourse, but they may be joined together on the present occasion, for the sake of brevity. Having already considered the honourable office of Jesus Christ as the Mediator of the new covenant, let us now proceed to contemplate the important place which he sustains, as, 2. The Messenger; 3. The Surety; and, 4. The Minister of it.

II. *His office as the Messenger of the covenant claims our present attention* The true import and design of the text will be obvious, if we observe, that the Jews who were brought back from captivity under the direction of Zerubbabel, abounded in zeal for the restoration of the temple, worship, and service of God, as we learn from the whole book of Ezra; but their posterity rapidly declined from their ways. In less than a hundred years, their religious fervour completely subsided; the body of the people became negligent in the worship of JEHOVAH, and the priests profaned his name. As they had slighted the words of their former prophets, Malachi was sent to reprove their instability, call them to repentance, and announce the approaching ministry of the

fore-runner of the great and long-expected Messiah: "Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before thy face." He then announced the coming of the *divine Messiah himself*, as the Messenger of the covenant: "The Lord whom ye seek shall suddenly come to his temple: even the *Messenger of the covenant*, whom ye delight in; behold he shall come, saith the Lord of hosts." These words evidently refer to Jesus Christ, as we learn from his own application of the former part of the verse to John the Baptist, in Matt. xi. 10. Let us therefore proceed to contemplate him as his Father's Messenger.

1. Jesus Christ was the Messenger of the covenant, as *he was commissioned by the Father to speak to the people in his name.* The God of Israel had spoken to the fathers, at sundry times, by the prophets, but in the last days of the Jewish state, he spoke to them by his Son. Heb. i. 1, 2. The appearing of this great Prophet, had been early foretold by Moses, and his prediction was applied to Christ by the apostle Peter: "For Moses truly said unto the fathers, a Prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you, of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you," Deut. xviii. 15—18. Acts iii. 22. When Jesus preached to the people, he did not speak in his own name, but in the name of the Father, and frequently informed them, that God had sent him into the world, and given him authority to declare his will: "Then cried Jesus in the temple, as he taught, saying, I am not come of myself, but he that sent me is true, whom ye know not. But I know him, for I am from him, and he hath sent me. My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me," John vii. 28, 29, 16.

2. Jesus was *anointed with the Holy Ghost, that he might preach to the people.* Eminent men were anciently set apart to offices of peculiar importance, by being solemnly anointed with holy oil, as a figure of the superior anointing with which the Messiah was to be distinguished. With a view to this the

evangelical prophet, when speaking of him, said, "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me; because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to proclaim liberty to the captive, and the acceptable year of the Lord." These words were visibly fulfilled to Christ, at his baptism, in the presence of his fore-runner, when the Holy Ghost was shed down upon him from heaven, to qualify him for preaching to the Jews: "Now when all the people were baptized, it came to pass that Jesus also being baptized, and praying, the heaven was opened: and the Holy Ghost descended in a bodily shape like a dove upon him, and a voice came from heaven, which said, Thou art my beloved Son, in thee I am well pleased." Other prophets revealed the mind of God according to the limited measure of his Spirit which they had received; but Jesus was anointed with the oil of gladness above his fellows, for the Father gave not the Spirit by measure to him. The Spirit of the Lord rested upon him as the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord; and made him of quick understanding in the fear of the Lord. Though destitute of the aid of human learning, he was distinguished from all other teachers by largeness of capacity, clearness of spiritual discernment, acuteness of judgment, and wisdom to speak as no other man had ever spoken. Compare Isa. lxi. 1, 2.; xi. 1—3. Luke iii. 21, 22.; iv. 16—21. John i. 32—34.; iii. 34.

3. Jesus *was furnished with a special message* from God to the people. Though his intellectual powers were of the highest kind, his doctrine was not in any degree the result of personal research or invention, like that of the false prophets among the Jews, or the more famed teachers of philosophy among the Gentiles. The principal time when the message of the Father was imparted to him by the Holy Ghost, has been already referred to; but it is of importance to observe, that he frequently disclaimed teaching any private sentiments of his own, and, in the most explicit manner, informed his hearers, that his Father

had given him the whole of the doctrine which he published. "I have many things to say: but he that sent me is true: and I speak to the world those things which I have heard of him. I do nothing of myself; but as my Father hath taught me, I speak these things. For I have not spoken of myself; but the Father who sent me, he gave me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak. Whatsoever I speak, therefore, even as the Father said unto me, so I speak." John viii. 26, 28.; xii. 49, 50.

4. Jesus *faithfully published and confirmed* his Father's message. During the years of his personal ministry he went about all Judea, and Galilee, and Samaria; and preached the gospel to all that would hear him, whether in the temple or in synagogues, in the streets or fields, on the mountains or by the sea. His mode of teaching was plain and familiar, being wisely adapted to the limited capacity of his hearers. The proverbs and similitudes which he used, were calculated to arrest the attention, excite the inquiries, and assist the apprehension of the ignorant who followed him. The lowliness of his outward circumstances, and the compassion which he manifested toward the poor, and such as were despised for open wickedness, attracted the confidence of multitudes who had been neglected by the Jewish teachers as sheep having no shepherd. The common people acknowledged that he spoke in a way peculiar to himself; with assurance, authority, and power superior to man. His faithfulness in boldly asserting the truth in the presence of its adversaries, and testifying against the secret sins of the priests and Pharisees, produced painful conviction in their hearts. On no occasion did he shrink from declaring seasonable truth, though the wicked hated him, and sought his death, because he exposed their evil works. He might have appealed to the Father in the prophetic language of the Psalmist, saying, "I have preached righteousness in the great congregation: lo, I have not refrained my lips, O Lord, thou knowest I have not hid thy righteousness within my heart, I have

declared thy faithfulness and thy salvation: I have not concealed thy loving kindness, and thy truth." Ps. xl. 9, 10. John xvii. 6—8.

He promoted no ignorant credulity among his hearers, by asking their blind assent to what he taught, without an understanding of its import, and the examination of the evidences by which it was supported. For the adequate confirmation of his message, he appealed to the well-known testimony of John the Baptist concerning him; the voice with which the Father had repeatedly honoured him from heaven; the Old Testament Scriptures which were circumstantially fulfilled in him; the spotless perfection of his personal obedience to the whole law; and the mighty works which God had appointed him to accomplish in his name. The works to which he referred, were not of an occult or equivocal kind; like the deceitful signs and lying wonders with which the ignorant and superstitious followers of the antichristian beast were imposed upon by interested priests during the dark ages. All his miracles were genuine, great, and undeniable. They were highly beneficial in their nature, worthy of the interposition of God, and of many different kinds. They were performed publicly, before multitudes of his most learned and sceptical enemies, who were perfectly qualified to judge of their reality; and as they were frequently repeated in the presence of many who had the best opportunities for observing them, there could be no possible deception. The genuineness and astonishing magnitude of them, were admitted by all classes of the Jewish nation, and his claims to the authority of a divine Messenger, were so unanswerable, that those who rejected his testimony were rendered without excuse. John v. 31—47.; viii. 42—47.; x. 32—38.; xv. 22—24.

5. Jesus *fully imparted the divine message to his apostles, and commanded them to publish it to all nations.* The Father did not send him to preach to the Gentiles, but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel; therefore his personal labours, as the Minister of the circumcision, were specially directed toward

them. For the same reason the temporary mission of those whom he sent before his face to announce the approach of the kingdom of heaven, was limited to their Jewish brethren. Rom. xv. 8. Matt. xv. 24.; x. 5, 6. Luke viii. 1—9.

But as Jesus was given by the Father to be a light of the Gentiles, that he might be his salvation to the ends of the earth, according to his covenant with Abraham; he called a select number of his disciples to be his Apostles, and expounded his doctrine to them in private, as they were able to bear it. Matt. x. 1—5.; xiii. 10—18. After he rose from the dead, he frequently appeared to them during the space of forty days, when he demonstrated his resurrection by many infallible proofs, gave them more ample instructions, and commanded them to go into all the world and teach his word to all nations. Acts i. 3. Matt. xxviii. 16—20. Luke xxiv. 25—48. As the Jewish prejudices and worldly passions of the apostles, darkened their minds, and thereby rendered them incapable of understanding the doctrine of Christ, without the aid of an inward supernatural influence, he promised to ascend to his heavenly Father and send down the Holy Ghost, as their abiding comforter, to bring what they had formerly heard from him to their remembrance, guide them into all truth, and qualify them for teaching the way of salvation to both Jews and Gentiles. John xiv. 16, 26.; xv. 26, 27.; xvi. 7—15.

The apostles were in due time fully qualified, as well as commissioned by Christ, to publish the whole system of divine truth by their preaching and writings, as his representatives and ambassadors to the nations; therefore their words demand our implicit reception as the very words of Christ himself, which the Father gave him to reveal to men as the Messenger of the covenant. John xx. 21, 22. 2 Cor. v. 18, 20. 1 Cor. xiv. 37.

PART FIFTH.

OF THE PLACE THAT JESUS CHRIST SUSTAINS IN THE NEW COVENANT.

SECTION III.—CHRIST IS THE SURETY OF THE NEW COVENANT.

III. *Let us next proceed to contemplate the Suretiship of Jesus Christ.* The inspired writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews, largely demonstrated the peculiar excellence of his priesthood, by shewing, that God had made him a Priest after the order of Melchisedec, which was superior to that of Aaron, and all the other sons of Levi; that he had been consecrated to minister in the heavenly tabernacle for ever, with the power of an endless life; and that he had been appointed to his office with the solemnity of his Father's oath. On these grounds he drew the important conclusion contained in our second text: "By so much was Jesus made a *Surety* of a better covenant."

The word surety denotes a *sponsor*, who becomes bound in behalf of another for the accomplishment of some undertaking or promise, and for the satisfaction of the object of it. Thus did the patriarch Judah become a surety to his father in behalf of his brethren for the safety of Benjamin. Gen. xliii. 8, 9.; xliv. 32, 33.

The suretiship of Christ is variously explained by different writers, according to the views which they have of the covenant with which it is connected. Some imagine that he became surety to his Father in behalf of his chosen people, by engaging to fulfil his law which they had violated, and to bear its curse to which they had exposed themselves by disobedience. This is to make him a surety of the old covenant, but not of the better one. We are abundantly informed, that he humbled himself as a ser-

vant, and became the substitute of the guilty, having been made under the law, that he might fulfil its precepts which they had violated, and redeem them from merited destruction by his atoning death; and this explanation would, no doubt, have been satisfactory, if he had been called the Surety of the old covenant, which consisted of precepts, and involved the transgressors of them in the divine curse: but he is clearly represented as the Surety of the new and better covenant, not of the old; consequently this view of the subject, cannot be admitted without the greatest confusion.

It may likewise be observed, that the obligations of a surety naturally cease, as soon as he has fulfilled the undertaking for which he had become bound, because nothing more can be required of him, and his suretiship can be no longer necessary. Now if the proper business of Christ as a surety, had consisted in fulfilling the demands of the divine law, and bearing its curse, his suretiship must have ceased when he said, "It is finished," and bowed his head upon the cross; for nothing more could be demanded of him as the voluntary substitute of his people: but this supposition would be directly contrary to our text, which shews that he still continues a Surety in his state of exaltation. His obligations as a Surety still remain, and they will continue during the whole period of his ministry as a high priest. This is evident from the general scope of the whole passage. Instead of being terminated by his death, his suretiship may with greater propriety be considered as having properly commenced from the period when the new covenant was ratified with his blood.

In order to ascertain the nature and extent of the obligations of any person who has become a surety between two parties, we must inquire which of them has pledged his promise to the other, and in what his undertaking consists; for his surety is bound to the other party for its accomplishment. Now, as Jesus is the Surety of the better covenant, the matter of which it consists must determine in behalf of

whom he has become bound, the proper object of his engagements as a Surety, and their precise extent. We have seen that the new covenant does not consist of precepts enjoined by God, and demanding a debt of obedience or suffering, which his people have undertaken to pay; but of free and comprehensive promises, which he has graciously undertaken to fulfil for their benefit. Therefore, as it was by God alone that the promises of the new covenant were made in favour of his people, who are the proper objects of them; we may conclude, with perfect safety, that Jesus Christ is a Surety, in behalf of God, for the ample accomplishment of all that he has promised to them, in the proper season.

None can reasonably object against this explanation, by alleging, that the almighty, and faithful, and unchangeable God, could have no need of any surety to become bound in his behalf for the performance of his promises. The suretiship of Christ was certainly not necessary on God's account; but it was highly desirable for the sake of his people, on account of the weakness of their confidence in him, arising from their great natural distance, ignorance, and conscious unworthiness. In much condescension to their infirmity, he has been pleased to confirm his promises with his sacred oath, and by various sensible signs and seals; and for the same reason the new covenant is confirmed by the suretiship of his Son.

A person may, without the slightest impropriety, become surety in behalf of one who is not inferior to himself, if those to whom he becomes bound, have had better opportunity for becoming acquainted with his character, ability, and friendly disposition, than with those of the original promiser. God the Father is invisible, incomprehensible, and terrible; an object of overwhelming dread to them who have provoked his righteous displeasure. Awakened sinners naturally judge of his disposition towards them, by their own feelings towards their enemies who have greatly injured them. They anticipate evil rather than good from his interposition, and

flee from him under the prevailing influence of fear. They find it difficult to believe that his thoughts are not like their thoughts, and that he will not render to them according to their iniquities. But the Son of God came down from heaven to the earth, and sojourned among mankind in a visible manner for several years. He kindly invited them to draw near to him as their friend, conversed with them in the most familiar manner, wept over their sufferings, died for their redemption, and gave numerous convincing proofs of his divine power and good-will. Now, as he was perfectly acquainted with all the gracious purposes of the unseen God respecting the salvation of sinners, nothing could have been better calculated to recommend the new covenant to their confidence, than his direct interposition as a Surety for the accomplishment of its promises, to all who embrace them as the ground of their hope.

For the farther illustration of this subject, we may observe, that *Jesus Christ is a Surety of the new covenant, in as much as the accomplishment of all its promises to the people of God, is completely secured,*

1. *By his near and unalterable relation to them.* He is not only their divine Creator and rightful Sovereign, but their Brother and Friend. He is a partaker of their nature in all its essential parts, with all its sinless feelings and tender sympathies; and he makes them partakers of his divine nature, as the children of God by regeneration and faith. Having in all things been made like his brethren, he is not ashamed to acknowledge their near relation to him in the presence of his heavenly Father. Being "the first-born among many brethren," he is equally distinguished by his own peculiar honours, and by his fraternal care for all the members of the whole family of which he is the chief. As their elder Brother, he is the fittest person to conciliate their heavenly Father when he is offended by any of his little children, and to inspire them with filial confidence in approaching to receive the forgiveness of their trespasses, and all the other fruits of his paternal love. He honours them as his friends,

by making known to them the gracious purposes of the Father respecting their future advancement; and as their relation to him cannot be dissolved, even by death itself, they have abundant reason to believe, that he will never neglect their interest, or suffer their confidence in the promises of his Father to be disappointed. Heb. ii. 11—17. Rom. viii. 29. John xv. 15.

2. *By his atoning death.* The death of Christ secures the accomplishment of all the promises of the new covenant, as it was the appointed means by which that covenant was ratified;—it satisfied the demands of offended justice, and thereby removed all those legal hindrances which tended to prevent the communication of spiritual benefits to the guilty;—and it gave him a deep personal interest in seeing those in behalf of whom he had suffered, made completely happy. He laid down his life for them, that he might redeem them from all iniquity and wrath, and advance them to inherit eternal glory with himself in his heavenly kingdom. Having finished his work of humiliation, it is impossible for him to be indifferent about the final success of his undertaking. It would have been inconsistent with his perfect wisdom, to empty himself, and submit to the most painful and ignominious death, in vain. As he accomplished, in the most perfect manner, all that God demanded of him in behalf of his chosen, his honour requires as perfect an accomplishment of all God's promises made to them; nor will he be satisfied with any thing less.

3. *By his unsearchable riches.* The engagements of a temporal surety, afford satisfaction only in proportion as he is known to possess property corresponding with the extent of them. The magnitude of the undertaking of Christ, as the Surety of the new covenant, is great above all human computation. This will appear evident, if we reflect on the number and variety of benefits which it comprehends—the inestimable value of every one of them —the countless multitude of persons to whom they

are promised—and their wretched condition by nature, as lost sinners scattered among all the nations of the earth. Yet the heirs of these promises have good reason to be satisfied with his engagements, because his riches are more than equal to them. All the blessings of the covenant are at his disposal, for he possesses all the unsearchable treasures of nature, of grace, and of glory; and all the fulness of the Godhead dwells in him bodily." Eph. iii. 8.

4. *By his unlimited power.* The accomplishment of the promises of this covenant, is a work of immense difficulty, which demands inconceivable power, as well as riches. The objects of them are naturally altogether depraved in heart, enslaved by Satan, exposed to the ensnaring influence of this evil world, subject to the sudden attack of the king of terrors, and liable to descend to corruption. The mighty power of the Surety is more than competent to meet all these difficulties. He formed the heart of man in its primitive purity at the beginning, and he can also create it anew in righteousness and true holiness. As the Captain of salvation, he overcame this world, and the malevolent prince of it, in the days of his flesh; and he is fully capable of conducting his followers in safety through all the perils of their earthly pilgrimage, and making them more than conquerors. He has all power in heaven and in earth, and his strength is made perfect in their weakness. Having prevailed over death, and him that had the power of it, by dying and rising from the grave, he is able to subdue all the enemies of his people, to collect their scattered dust, change their vile bodies, fashion them like his own glorious body, and perform all things that are promised to them.

5. *By his boundless love towards them.* The love of Christ to his people is largely celebrated in his word, as unmerited and free, unsolicited and preventing, great and efficacious, surpassing human knowledge, steadfast without decay, and absolutely eternal. As he pitied them when they were enemies, and laid down his life to save them from impending

wrath, and ratify a new covenant with them, they can have no just reason to question his full determination to put them in possession of all its benefits. Having loved them when they were unworthy, and become a curse for their sake, he will not fail to exercise his wisdom, authority, and power in their behalf. He could not atone for their guilt without the deepest personal abasement and suffering; but after having redeemed them to himself with his blood, he can deliver them from all their enemies, and exalt them to inherit his Father's promises, with the utmost ease. As his love made him willing to do those things for them which were extremely difficult and humbling, who can suspect his willingness to reign for them, by effectually imparting to them all the fruits of his death? He will never permit any of those whom he ransomed from the sentence of divine justice, to be separated from his presence, and eternally ruined, by the malice of Satan. Having drawn them to himself from their former state of blind alienation, and become the object of their chief confidence and affection, he will never allow them to be separated from his love, or to come short of that enduring felicity which his word taught them to expect. Rom. viii. 35—39.

6. *By his unchangeable faithfulness.* He is faithful as the Saviour of all that believe in him; therefore he will not forsake them, nor disappoint their hope in his word. He is a merciful and faithful High Priest; and having been tried by the most formidable temptations in the days of his flesh, he is touched with the feeling of their infirmities, he knows how to succour them, he will not fail to pray to his Father to keep them from evil, nor neglect to help them in time of need. As their divinely appointed Captain and Leader, he will undoubtedly acquit himself, by defending them from every fatal danger, and conducting them to his heavenly rest. Having been entrusted by the Father with the management and care of all his chosen flock, as their good Shepherd, he has undertaken to collect them from their wanderings, into his fold, to feed them in

his good pasture, preserve them from being ever plucked out of his hand, and give them eternal life: his promise to this effect is sure, and he is incapable of violating it. Having obtained the most excellent ministry, as the administrator of the new covenant, it belongs to his office to dispense all its benefits to those who take hold of it as the ground of their hope; and since he abideth faithful, he cannot deny himself; therefore not one of its promises can ever fail. He kept those who had been committed to his care during the period of his humiliation, so that no genuine disciple was lost, notwithstanding the numerous dangers to which they had been exposed; and as he gave an honourable account of his faithfulness and care, in that prayer which he offered up in their behalf before his death, we may rest assured, that he will be equally prepared, when delivering up the kingdom to his Father at the last day, to introduce all the heirs of promise into his presence in a state of spotless perfection, saying, "Behold me, and the children whom thou hast given me. I have kept them in thy name, and none of them is lost. Now, all mine are thine, and thine are mine, and I am glorified in them. Heb. ii. 10, 13, 17, 18.; iv. 14—16. John x. 9—30; xvii. 9—24.

PART FIFTH.

OF THE PLACE THAT JESUS CHRIST SUSTAINS IN THE NEW COVENANT.

SECTION IV.—CHRIST IS THE MINISTER, OR ADMINISTRATOR, OF THE NEW COVENANT.

IV. Let us now contemplate *the administration of Christ as the Minister of the new covenant.* This comprehends all that he has hitherto done for the heirs of promise since his resurrection from the dead, and all that he has undertaken to do for them,

according to his Father's appointment, till they be made perfectly blessed in his celestial presence. As the subject is of large extent, a simple outline is all that can be admitted in this place.

1. *In administering the new covenant, Jesus Christ sheds down the Holy Spirit from the Father.* When his fore-runner called the Jews to repent, and baptized them with water, he announced the approach of one infinitely superior, to baptize them with the Holy Ghost, as with fire. Agreeably to this intimation, our Lord encouraged his hearers to believe in him, by giving them the prospect of the liberal effusion of the Spirit, as rivers of living water. When the minds of his disciples were depressed by the near prospect of his departure from this world, he supported them, by promising to procure the Holy Spirit from the Father by his intercession, and to send him down as another Comforter, to dwell in them, and abide with them for ever. "I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever. It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you." John vii. 37—39; xiv. 16, 17, 26; xvi. 7—15.

After his resurrection, he frequently appeared to his apostles during forty days, instructed them concerning his kingdom, and gave them commission to preach his gospel to all nations; but as their minds were darkened by worldly passions and Jewish prejudices, which hindered them from comprehending his words, he renewed his promise of the Holy Ghost, and commanded them to wait at Jerusalem till they were endued with power from on high, saying, "John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost, not many days hence." Luke xxiv. 46—49. Acts i. 3—8.

Our Lord manifested the efficacy of his intercession within the vail, and fulfilled his promise to his disciples, only ten days after his ascension from them, by shedding down the Holy Ghost in a visi-

ble, unprecedented, and efficacious manner. On the day of pentecost, when "they were all with one accord in one place, suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues, like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them: and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost," Acts ii. 1—12. By this spiritual baptism, all things that the apostles had formerly heard from Christ, were brought to their remembrance; their minds were enlightened with the clear and extensive knowledge of that religion, which they had been appointed to propagate; they were qualified to publish the truth in many languages which they had not formerly acquired; they were animated with undaunted boldness to state the doctrines of the gospel, and maintain them before their acutest adversaries; they were furnished with the power of performing miracles, and imparting spiritual gifts, to confirm their testimony, and prepared for teaching the whole of the Christian system, with infallible purity, by their preaching and writings.

Repeated communications of the Holy Ghost were afterwards granted, in a liberal manner, to both Jewish and Gentile converts; and, by his supernatural influence, many of them were furnished with miraculous gifts of various different kinds. Our Apostle, in enumerating these, said, "To one is given by the Spirit, the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit; to another faith by the same Spirit; to another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit; to another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another divers kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues." Acts iv. 31.; x. 44—47. 1 Cor. xii. 7—11. These miraculous signs and gifts of the Holy Ghost, were liberally bestowed by Christ in the apostolic age, partly for the confirmation of his gospel, and partly to promote the more rapid promulgation of it; but the continuance of them throughout

the succeeding ages of the church, was never promised. Christians of succeeding times were rather cautioned to take heed of being deceived by signs and wonders of spurious quality, and commanded to hold fast the truth that the apostles had communicated, as the only rule of faith. The illuminating and renewing influence of the Spirit, is constantly necessary to the existence of personal and vital godliness; therefore it is granted by the Redeemer to all his genuine disciples of every period. By one Spirit they are all born again to God, baptized into the living body of Christ, builded together as a living temple for God, and adorned with the fruits of righteousness; for if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his." 1 Cor. xii. 13.; iii. 16. Gal. v. 5, 16, 22—25. Rom. viii. 9, 14—16, 26.

2. *Christ raises up and qualifies suitable teachers to publish the new covenant.* "When he ascended up on high, he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors, and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ," Eph. iv. 8—16. The office of the apostles and prophets, was extraordinary; therefore no succession of them was either bestowed or promised: but the Lord has promised to preserve a succession of ordinary pastors and teachers, according to his own heart. Jer. iii. 15.; xxxiii. 18, 22. He has raised up evangelists, from time to time, to extend the boundaries of his kingdom among the nations, by calling men out of darkness into the true light, gathering believers into churches similar to those which were collected at the beginning, and superintending them for the advancement of their union and mutual benefit. He still continues to give his people faithful pastors, who watch for their souls, and feed them with knowledge. It belongs to those who have been put in trust with the gospel, to train up others as their successors in the work of the Lord, by committing his word to faithful men; but none can impart all the requisite qualifications

of gospel ministers, except Jesus Christ himself. Notwithstanding all the advantages which they derive from the appointed instrumentality of human teaching, they are still to be considered as his special gift to men. They are the under-shepherds whom he employs and superintends, and the stars which he holds in his right hand, and incessantly directs for the benefit of his chosen. He has promised to be with them even to the end of the world, and his wise administration in the bestowment of their diversified talents, graces, and success, deserves to be gratefully acknowledged.

3. *Christ draws sinners to himself.* For this purpose he was lifted up once on the cross, and afterwards exalted to be a Prince and a Saviour, upon his celestial throne. He draws men in an outward instrumental way, by the promulgation of his gospel; and by the inward influence of his Spirit he effectually applies it to their hearts, so as thereby to convince them of sin, righteousness, and judgment, bring them to unfeigned repentance before God, and persuade them to cleave to himself for salvation, with resolute confidence. During the apostolic age he gathered many thousands of Jews and Gentiles into one spiritual body, to make an open profession of his name, observe his ordinances, and enjoy fellowship with him as their living Head. From that period until now, he has continued to attract multitudes by the doctrine of his cross, which is the power of God to salvation; and he will still continue to draw perishing men into a state of vital union and communion with himself, until all that were chosen of his Father be gathered into one. John xii. 32.

4. *Christ freely forgives all the sins of them who believe in him.* When he appeared on earth, in the lowly form of a servant, the mighty works which he performed, demonstrated his divine power to forgive sins, to the astonishment and joy of his hearers. He was afterwards exalted to the right hand of God, that he might bestow on sinners both repentance and forgiveness. All that believe are commanded to forbear, and forgive one another, even as Christ

has forgiven them. By washing them from their sins in his own blood, he delivers them from all condemnation, frees their conscience from the distressing conviction of guilt, introduces them to his Father, with acceptance, gives them daily access to his presence, and honours them with a place in his family. Matt. ix. 1—8. Col. iii. 13.

5. *Jesus Christ represents all his disciples in the heavenly sanctuary, and makes intercession for them with his Father.* Under the law of Moses the Levitical high priest entered the worldly sanctuary to represent the Israelites, and minister before God on their behalf, with the names of all the tribes engraven on his breast-plate: but being only an imperfect creature, encompassed with infirmities, his service was valuable merely as an instituted figure of the ministry of Christ, which is every way superior. Accordingly we are informed, that He did not enter the holy places made with hands by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood, (with which he had been consecrated the high priest of our profession) he entered once into the true tabernacle of heaven; and there he appears continually in the presence of God for his people, with their names upon his heart; he makes effectual intercession for them according to their various exigencies, and sits for ever on the right hand of the Majesty on high, to attend to their interest. Heb. ix. 11, 12, 24.; viii. 1, 2.; vii. 23—28.

The prayer which he presented before his death, shews for whom he intercedes, and what blessings he solicits in their behalf. He watches over all that believe, with unceasing attention; and observes all their temptations, faults, dangers, necessities, duties, and desires. He takes a deep interest in them, and acknowledges their relation to himself in the sight of the heavenly host. He asks every blessing adapted to their circumstances and necessities, during this life and that which is to come. By his ministry they are encouraged to come with filial boldness to the throne of grace, and their prayers

are presented by him as incense to his Father. John xvii. 9—24. Heb. iv. 14—16. Rev. viii. 3, 4.

6. *Christ rules among his people as their King.* The Lord God fulfilled his ancient promise, and rewarded the perfect obedience of Jesus, by giving him the throne of his father David, and appointing him to reign on his holy hill of Zion for ever more. Ps. ii. 6—12. Isa. ix. 6, 7. Luke i. 32, 33. Eph. i. 20—22.

Having obtained all power in heaven and earth, he sent forth his accredited ambassadors to proclaim his reign to mankind, collect his subjects out of the world into his visible kingdom, and teach them to observe his commands. He rescues his people from the dominion of Satan, makes them willing subjects in the day of his power, defends them from their adversaries, and reigns in their hearts by his love, which constrains them to love and obey him. He rules in the assemblies of his saints by the transforming principles and edifying examples exhibited in his word—the righteous laws which he has enjoined, and the ministry of his servants who apply them—the seasonable reproofs and commendations which he tenders to them—together with the most arousing threats and cheering promises, the outward administration of his providence, and the effectual influence of his grace. The vigilance and wisdom of his government, his equity and faithfulness in judging, his majesty in asserting his high authority, joined with the most encouraging condescension and liberality towards his servants, are all displayed in a manner calculated to impress the heart,—in the seven epistles which he addressed to the churches of Asia, Rev. ii. iii.

7. *Christ strengthens and helps his people in time of need.* The duties which they have to perform during their pilgrimage, are numerous, important, and sometimes difficult; yet they are feeble imperfect creatures in themselves, frequently depressed by affliction, and daily exposed to dangerous temptations. These things cause them to feel their own insufficiency, and their absolute need of supernatural

aid, to keep them from dishonouring their profession. The administration of Christ meets their necessity. He furnishes them not only with a perfect rule of duty, and suitable armour for resisting the powers of darkness, but with inward ability to perform the one and use the other. While he calls them to deny themselves, and follow his example, to put on the whole armour of God, and wrestle against their spiritual adversaries, as good soldiers contending for an unfading crown; he also pities their weakness, and generously supplies them with competent strength for their work and warfare. Sometimes, indeed, he keeps them from the hour of temptation with which others are tried, by hiding them from the assaults of their enemies; in other cases, he permits the messenger of Satan to buffet them, and make them feel their infirmity, for the purpose of humbling them and teaching them to trust in him alone. But even when they are sifted as wheat by temptation, and brought into great perplexity, he secretly supports their faith, keeps them from falling away, makes his grace sufficient for them, perfects his strength in their weakness, and encourages them to persevere to the end by the hope of ultimate victory and triumph. By the declarations of his word, and their growing experience of his effectual aid, they are trained to be strong in the grace which is in Christ, and to glory in their infirmities, that his power may rest upon them. Rev. iii. 10. Luke xxii. 32. 2 Cor. xii. 7—10.

8. *Christ will exalt the souls of the faithful to reign with him on the earth.* The prophets have foretold that the kingdom of the Messiah shall succeed the last of the four great monarchies, and prevail over all the world for many generations. When Jesus ascended to the Father, his object was to receive a kingdom from him, that he might return and reign over it. He will not appear in a visible manner among mortals, nor establish any secular dominion among them, for his kingdom is not of this world; but he will reign in a spiritual manner, by restraining the powers of darkness, abolishing every false

system of religion, putting an end to all oppression, filling the earth with divine knowledge, calling all nations into his church, and blessing them with unprecedented righteousness, peace, and happiness, for many ages.

He encourages his disciples to serve him, and suffer patiently with him in their bodies, by promising to exalt their souls, during their separate state, to share his dominion, in proportion to their former labours and tribulations. When the long-desired period shall arrive, he will advance them from their present state of rest and suspense under the altar of heaven, give them power over the nations, and make them to reign with him on the earth, as kings and priests unto God. During the long continuance of his millennial kingdom, his faithful martyrs shall have the unspeakable felicity of witnessing the complete triumph of the cause of truth for which they formerly suffered in the flesh, and of promoting it by the exercise of their regal authority. As the numerous legions of Satan formerly co-operated with him in deceiving the nations, and actively promoting ignorance, delusion, idolatry, wickedness, and misery of every kind; the souls of the blessed shall exert a powerful though invisible influence, in conjunction with Jesus Christ, for the advancement of useful knowledge and true holiness, righteousness and peace, love and joy. Dan. vii. 13, 14, 27. Luke xix. 11—19. 2 Tim. ii. 12. Rev. iii. 21.; v. 9—11.; ii. 26, 27.; v. 10.; xx. 1—4.

9. *Christ will raise all mankind from the dead, and fix their eternal state.* As the Father has committed all things into his hands, he must reign till all his enemies be put under his feet. The last enemy that shall be subdued is death. He will destroy death, at the last day, by coming down from heaven in a visible manner with great glory, raising all generations of human beings to immortal existence, and collecting them before his throne of judgment. The wicked shall then be convicted, silenced, condemned by his righteous sentence, and punished with everlasting destruction from the glory of his

power. He will openly acknowledge the righteous, approve their obedience, and graciously reward them with unfading glory. The visible heaven and earth shall be dissolved with fire, and afterwards renewed by him in more than primeval perfection and beauty, as the perpetual habitation of righteousness. When all these things shall be accomplished, in a manner worthy of himself, he will finish his administration, by delivering up the kingdom to his Father who put all things under him, when God shall be all in all, and his Son shall inherit all things in conjunction with him for evermore. 1 Cor. xv. 20—57. Matt. xxv. 31—46. 2 Thess. i. 6—10. 2 Pet. iii. 10—13.

1*st*, This subject shews that *the gospel of Christ has the strongest claim to our earnest and daily attention.* It is the sure word of the living God. He employed his only Son to publish it on the earth, as his most honourable messenger to mankind, and commanded them to hear him with becoming regard. The truth of it was fully established by numberless uncontrollable miracles and gifts of the Holy Ghost. Its subject is in the highest degree interesting and necessary, as it reveals the only possible way of salvation for sinners. It is now addressed to us from heaven; and how shall we escape, if we neglect to receive it, or suffer it to depart from our minds? Heb. ii. 1—4.

2*d*, *Gospel hearers have every reasonable encouragement to embrace the promises of the new covenant, as their sure and abiding inheritance.* These promises are very precious, comprehensive, and free to all who will accept of them; and we have seen, that the seasonable accomplishment of them is completely secured to all that believe, by Jesus Christ himself, who cannot possibly violate his engagements, or disappoint the hope of his people. It is dangerous to place an absolute dependance on the promises of changeable dying men; but none who trust in this divine Surety, shall ever be put to shame.

3*d*, *Those who embrace the new covenant, ought to hold fast the beginning of their confidence and rejoicing steadfastly to the end, as the appointed means of in-*

heriting its promises: They are the word of God that cannot lie, and there can be no degree of failure on the part of the Surety; but sinners may deceive themselves, by seeming to believe for a time, and afterwards fainting in the hour of temptation—thereby shewing that they had never truly received the word of salvation into their hearts. Thus the Israelites believed God at the Red Sea, and sung his praise; yet they soon forgot his works, and at length provoked him to disinherit them, by their prevailing unbelief. Their fatal example is seriously urged on the minds of those who make a profession of Christ, for the purpose of exciting them to contemplate his character and administration as their high priest, and cleave to him with full purpose of heart. See the whole of Heb. iii. iv.

4*th*, *This should encourage the disciples of Christ to make daily application to him for the supply of their need.* He kindly convinces self-deceivers, shews them their wretchedness, freely tenders his benefits to the poor, counsels them to buy of him without price, and earnestly entreats their consent, saying, "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me." He calls men to receive him in the name of the Father, as his messenger to them, and invites them to ask what they will of the Father, in his name; he brings them into the holiest of all by faith, and renders their addresses acceptable, by offering them up to God with his own intercession; he promises to bestow whatever they ask, and fulfil their petitions in the most proper season; he has greater pleasure in imparting than in withholding the fruits of his death, and accounts it his honour to be incessantly employed in distributing them. Having such grounds of confidence, let us enlarge our spiritual desires, and daily present our fervent supplications before the celestial throne, with importunity and perseverance, Rev. iii. 17—20.

5*th*, *The present administration of Christ demands our entire submission.* God has invested him with

supreme authority, as the King of Zion and the Lord of all. He rules with wisdom, and righteousness and mercy, to bless all his subjects with inward peace, and exalt them to share his glory. Let us therefore take his yoke upon us, and cordially yield ourselves to him as our rightful Lord; let us patiently bear his cross, and keep all his commandments to the end, that we may be advanced to reign with him in his kingdom, and admitted at last to inherit all things with him for ever.

PART FIFTH.

OF THE PLACE THAT JESUS CHRIST SUSTAINS IN THE NEW COVENANT.

SECTION V.—CHRIST IS THE SUM AND SUBSTANCE OF THE NEW COVENANT.

ISAIAH XLII. 6. *I will give thee for a covenant of the people.*

THE great Messiah is subject of Old Testament revelation as well as of the New. Moses wrote of him both in a direct and figurative manner. All the succeeding prophets from Samuel spoke of his days. They enquired and searched diligently concerning the time of his appearing, the design of his sufferings, and their glorious result. Isaiah spoke with peculiar clearness concerning his complex person and perfect character, the depth of his abasement as the substitute of transgressors, and his subsequent exaltation as the Ruler of Zion, his great salvation, and long protracted reign. In the beginning of this chapter, he is represented as the faithful Servant and peculiar Delight of God the Father, appointed by him to be the teacher of mankind, and distinguished by lowliness and meekness, gentleness and fortitude, resolute perseverance and

ultimate success, in his most arduous undertaking; and he is plainly exhibited to general attention, as a complete Saviour, called and specially separated to his work, supported and approved by God, and *given for a covenant* of the people.

In formerly contemplating the important place which Christ sustains in the new covenant, we have seen, that he is the Mediator, the Messenger, the Surety, and the Administrator of it. We are now called, by the text, to contemplate him as the very sum and substance of the covenant.

We shall be convinced that Christ is the sum and substance of the new covenant, if we consider,

First, The general account of what is treasured up in him for the people of God.

Second, The particular blessings which they find in him, and derive from him.

I. Let us consider the *general account of what is treasured up in him.*

1. Christ has *unsearchable riches* to be imparted to his people. He was originally rich as the Creator and Lord of all things, but he emptied himself, and appeared among mankind in circumstances of the deepest poverty, without any earthly inheritance of his own, or so much as a house where he could lay his head. He became outwardly indigent, from ardent love towards those who had rendered themselves poor, and miserable, and helpless, by departing from God—that he might deliver them from their sorrows, and advance them to the possession of enduring riches. Hence our apostle said, "Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich," 2 Cor. viii. 9. Having resigned all things, and become obedient unto death, the Father approved his work, raised him to ineffable glory, and rewarded his generosity, by delivering all things into his hands. He is therefore represented, in his exalted state, as possessing riches that cannot be explored by mor-

tals; and the preachers of the gospel are appointed to make open proclamation of them, for the benefit of the poor, by persuading them to apply to him without delay, and be for ever enriched by his superabundant treasures: "Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ," Eph. iii. 8.

2. Christ has *inexhaustible fulness of all those things that his people need.* "He is full of grace and truth. It pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell. For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily." He abides in his faithful disciples as their life, their spiritual strength, their joy, their everlasting hope, and their all in all. It is of his fulness that they have received, even grace for grace. In all their necessities they look to him; they are complete in him, being filled with all the fulness of God. John i. 14, 16. Col. i. 19.; ii. 9, 10.; iii. 11.

3. Christ has *all that the Father has*, as his own. He has all the infinite attributes and perfections of the Father, as his only begotten Son and perfect image. He has the Holy Spirit in him without measure, and he can send him to his disciples, and favour them with his diversified influences according to his own will. All the works, and possessions, and subjects of the Father are his, as their original Creator and appointed Heir. Hence, he displays all the glories of the divine character, exercises unlimited dominion over all the creatures of God, bestows blessings of every kind on his people; and they enjoy all things in him as their celestial Head. When comforting them before his expected departure, he said, "Believe me that I am in the Father, and the Father in me. All things that the Father hath are mine." When addressing the Father, he said, "All mine are thine, and thine are mine, and I am glorified in them." John xiv. 11.; xvi. 15.; xvii. 10, 23.

4. *All the promises of the new covenant are summed up in Christ.* He received them all from the Father, unfolded their meaning, and confirmed them with

his blood. They are inseparably connected with him in the eternal purpose of God, and the declarations of his word. The manifold blessings included in them are all exhibited together with him, as the comprehensive gift of divine grace; they result from his saving offices, and those who believe are made partakers of them all, in and with him by the gospel. By receiving Christ, they become the heirs of promise, and secure an unalterable interest in all the good things that have been prepared for the objects of divine love. "For all the promises of God in him are yea, and in him amen, unto the glory of God." 2 Cor. i. 20. Eph. iii. 6.

II. Let us now take a brief view of *the particular blessings of the new covenant, which the people of God find in Christ, and derive from him.*

1. They obtain the *light of divine knowledge* in and from him. We have already considered the great importance of this, as one of the principal blessings promised in it. We may now observe, that all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge which God has engaged to communicate, are hid in Christ. He was given by him as "a light of the Gentiles;" and, to shew his excellence and sufficiency, he is represented as the light of the world, the true light which enlighteneth every man that cometh into the world—the truth itself, and the wisdom of God. He is made of God to be the wisdom of all who are implanted in him by a vital union. John viii. 12.; i. 9.; xiv. 6.; 1 Cor. i. 24, 30.

All the numberless rays of natural, spiritual, and divine light, are connected with him, as their true centre; and they emanate from him as their only source. He has the most perfect knowledge of all the perfections, the purposes, the works, and the will of God. He exhibits the light of truth to them who sit in darkness, by his word; he opens the understandings of his disciples to comprehend it, and gives them practical skill to apply it. He makes them wise unto salvation, teaches them how to please God in the land of the living; and in the world to come he will cause them to see him as he

is, and advance them to walk in his presence as their everlasting light.

2. The disciples of Christ obtain *a complete justifying righteousness in him*, corresponding with the new covenant promise of pardoning mercy. Having been made under the law, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, that he might redeem the guilty, and bring in an everlasting righteousness. Hence, the remission of sins is freely preached in his name, and by him all that believe are justified. In him they have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins. He is made of God to them for righteousness, and they are accepted as the righteousness of God in him; for as by the disobedience of Adam they were constituted sinners, so by the obedience of Christ they are constituted righteous. Being washed from their sins in his blood, and clothed with the spotless robe which he puts upon them, they are prepared for appearing before the Most High without dread, they are encouraged to acknowledge their old transgressions without reserve, they relinquish all dependance on their own works, and rejoice in him all the day, because his name is called THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS. 1 Cor. i. 30. 2 Cor. v. 21. Jer. xxiii. 5, 6.

3. *In Jesus Christ, those who believe, obtain peace and reconciliation both with God and with each other.* The new covenant is justly termed a covenant of peace, as those with whom it is made, are all delivered from deserved punishment, from slavish fear, and from those selfish and turbulent passions which naturally proceed from fear. Jesus is their peace, in the most complete and effectual way. He made peace by the blood of his cross, as the anger of God was thereby appeased, and an honourable foundation was laid for the proclamation of peace on earth and good will towards guilty men. He publishes peace and reconciliation to them by his gospel; by the powerful application of his blood, he gives peace to the awakened conscience; by manifesting the divine condescension and love towards helpless rebels,

he softens their obdurate hearts, takes away their natural enmity, and reconciles them to God. They see that God is well pleased with the satisfaction of Christ, and with them through him; hence they become pleased with the character of God, as it is made manifest by the doctrine of his cross. It is likewise in him that they are united in peace and love among themselves. By his death, he removed the wall of partition that Moses had fixed between Jews and Gentiles, which had long been the occasion of bitter animosity in both parties. His gospel calls the heathen to forsake their vain idols, and become worshippers of the living God. His Spirit unites all that believe, as the members of one living body in him, makes them partakers of equal privileges, and joins them together by the bond of mutual affection. Those who were far off, are brought nigh; all grounds of jealousy are removed; enemies are converted into friends; and perpetual harmony is established by the reconciling blood and the mild administration of the Prince of Peace. Deeply sensible of their personal obligations to him, for his redeeming and pardoning love, and keeping in view their equal relation to him as their living head, they are taught to put away all bitterness, and cherish a cordial attachment to each other for his sake. Eph. ii. 13—19.

4. Believers obtain *a new and endearing relation to God*, in and by Christ. This is one of the principal blessings of the new covenant; for he has said, "I will be to them a God;" and again, "I will be a Father unto you." None can properly estimate the importance of this blessing, except those who know the state of degradation and wretchedness in which mankind are by nature, as aliens from God, the slaves of sin, children of the wicked one, and heirs of wrath. Such persons consider it the highest honour to be admitted into the family of God, acknowledged by him as children, and permitted to claim an interest in him as their heavenly Father. This invaluable privilege is obtained in and by Christ, nor can it be attained in any other way. As he is the only begotten of the Father by nature, those who

believe in him are brought nigh to God, and made his children by adoption. Christ owns them as his brethren, teaches them to address his Father as their Father, and encourages them to apply to him by their prayers, for the fruits of his paternal love: "To as many as received him gave he power to become the sons of God." When sending a message to them after his resurrection, he said, "Go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God." The saints were all predestinated to the adoption of children by Christ, and redeemed by his death that they might have access to enjoy it; they are born again by the influence of his quickening Spirit, and made actual partakers of all the honours of adoption by faith in him. Gal. iii. 26.; iv. 4—7.

5. Believers derive *spiritual renovation* from Christ. This corresponds with that article of the covenant in which God has promised to write his law in their heart. Christ is made sanctification to them. 1 Cor. i. 30. He is the skilful physician who heals their souls, by removing the loathsome and dangerous disease of sin. He implants the holy principles and precepts of his word in their hearts, where they remain and produce good fruit. He honours them with the inward manifestation of his glory, and thereby changes them into his image. He abides in them, and imparts seasonable supplies of his grace, by which they are made to glorify God and advance towards perfection. By the powerful operation of his Holy Spirit, he enables them to mortify their natural lusts, leads them forward in the narrow way of new obedience, adorns them with gracious affections, and prepares them for every good work. He grants them actual fellowship with himself in his sufferings and death, resurrection and ascension, in consequence of which their old man is crucified with him; they become truly dead to sin, and incapable of continuing the practice of it, or finding delight in it; their depraved tempers and carnal propensities disappear, and perish as the dead body decays in the grave. Be-

ing quickened and raised up together with him, they live to the praise of God, by Christ living in them; and as he sits on the right hand of his Father in heavenly places, their affections are attracted towards the things that are above, and they long for his second appearing, to present them without spot before his throne, and satisfy them with his likeness. While they cherish a deep conviction of their obligations to abstain from every appearance of evil, and to perfect holiness in the fear of the Lord, it is their daily care to cease from trusting in their own strength, or the stability of their pious resolutions. Without either desponding, or indulging any criminal sloth, they acknowledge their utter insufficiency for every good work, and undertake whatever is required of them, in simple dependance on the aid of his sufficient grace; knowing that the faithful can do all things through Christ who strengtheneth them. Rom. vi. 3—11. Philip. iv. 13.

6. Believers find *strong consolation* in Christ under their various troubles. They stand in peculiar need of spiritual comfort, because they are called to relinquish the carnal pleasures in which they delighted, while under the dominion of sin. The way in which they are commanded to walk, is narrow and strait, rugged and contrary to their natural feelings. They are exposed to all the common troubles of this life, hated by the world, assaulted with the fiery darts of Satan, frequently chastened by their heavenly Father, and sometimes "pressed out of measure, above strength." While worldly men around them rejoice in the enjoyment of their transient portion of good things, the godly do often "weep and lament" under a burden of complicated afflictions; but they are not left desolate in the midst of their troubles, for as the sufferings of Christ abound in them, so their consolation also abounds by Christ. 2 Cor. i. 5.

He kindly frees them from their insupportable burden of guilt, and the distressing fear of everlasting torment. After laying to heart that state of endless anguish which their iniquities had merited,

and obtaining pardon through his blood, they are taught to account all those afflictions light, which are only temporal and momentary. He cheers them in the season of distress, with his peculiar presence, manifests his favour as their unchangeable friend, discloses the thoughts of his heart towards them, and causes them to taste that he is gracious. By taking away the natural bitterness of their mind, and sweetening their temper, he qualifies them for participating of the purest pleasure, and makes them to know in an experimental manner what is meant by "the comfort of love." He renders them happy in the enjoyment of his own boundless love towards them, and in the exercise of love towards him and the objects of his favour who bear his image. His service becomes a source of growing satisfaction to them; and an important part of that obedience which he requires, consists in rejoicing daily in himself. His Spirit applies the promises to their hearts, as the earnest of the heavenly inheritance—fills them with unspeakable joy in believing—and makes them to abound in the hope of the glory of God. The felicity which he imparts during this life, exceeds all the pleasures of sin; but to what degree it will be advanced when they shall be admitted to behold his uncreated glory, and dwell with him, in his Father's house not made with hands, it is impossible for imperfect creatures to conceive. 1 Peter i. 8.

7. Believers find *complete and final deliverance from all evil*, in Christ. The evils to which they are exposed by nature, as fallen creatures, are numberless; and their deliverance is accomplished in a gradual way, calculated to establish gracious habits, and increase their ultimate felicity. They are not exempted from sharing the ordinary sufferings of humanity, for it is meet that they be conformed to their Redeemer in bearing the cross, that they may be prepared for partaking of his glory. During their season of probation, they may be indigent in circumstances, hated by their earthly kindred, persecuted for their religion, and wasted with painful

diseases; but they are not liable to be utterly forsaken in the midst of their troubles. While they are tried by the changes of time, and the afflictions of their lot in the world, Jesus Christ continues with them, and keeps them from the evil of sin, which would be fatal to their best interest. He is ever near, "as a hiding-place from the wind, a covert from the tempest, and a great rock" to which they may speedily flee and obtain safety in a weary land. In him they find a sure refuge from the encroaching power of sin, the malice of the wicked, and the temptations of Satan. He defends them from all their spiritual adversaries, clothes them with the whole armour of God, supports them in the evil day, and crowns them with victory. He disarms the king of terrors, frees them from the bondage of fear when meeting his attack, renders natural death advantageous, and causes them to wait the hour of dismission from their earthly tabernacle, with ardent desire, as the end of their pilgrimage. At the termination of their warfare, he will grant them rest from all their labours and burdens, deliver them from all their afflictions and pains, and put an end to their sorrows and vexing cares. He will in due time redeem them from the power of the grave, when death shall be swallowed up in victory, and they shall have occasion to adopt the triumphant song of the apostle, "O death, where is thy sting! O grave, where is thy victory! The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law; but thanks be to God who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." He will free them completely from the stain of sin, and present them to himself without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing. Being made of God to be their redemption, he will bring them out of all their temporal distresses, save them from tasting of the second death, and exalt them far above the reach of new temptations. They look to him for deliverance from all the mournful effects of the fall, and for a state of rest and security far superior to that which was forfeited by the early entrance of sin. Being brought out of all their tribu-

lations by his mighty power, "they shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more, neither shall the sun light upon them, nor any heat. God shall wipe all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying; neither shall there be any more pain; for the former things are passed away," Rom. viii. 35—39. Rev. vii. 14—17.; xxi. 4.

8. The disciples of Christ obtain *eternal life* in him. We have already seen that this is included in the promise of JEHOVAH to be a God to his people; "For he is not a God of the dead, but of the living: for all live unto him." Being the Son of God, "in truth and love," Christ has eternal life in him, as an essential attribute of his divine nature; "for as the Father hath life in himself, so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself." His apostles testified concerning him, as "that eternal life which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us. God hath given to us eternal life; and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath life." He is the true source, and author, and preserver of life to his people; and because he lives, they shall live also. Hence he said, "I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die," John v. 21.; xi. 25, 26. John i. 2.; v. 11, 12.

He imparts life to his disciples at the time of their conversion, by his word and Spirit; he lives in them, and causes them to live to God in a new and gracious manner, during the course of their earthly pilgrimage; and he will raise them from the dead at the last day, and honour them with a crown of life, which shall never fade. He has repeatedly promised them this crowning blessing, with clearness of language corresponding with the importance of the subject, James i. 12. John iii. 15, 16.; vi. 27, 39, 40, 47, 54, 57.

The natural life of man is justly accounted precious, so that even those whose circumstances are very uncomfortable, choose to preserve it, though at the expence of their whole temporal property. Hence, it has

been said, "Skin for skin: yea, all that a man hath, will he give for his life." Now, if it be reasonable to set so high a value on this transient life, which is attended with much imperfection and sorrow, how unspeakably precious must that life be which is found in Christ! He will cause his people to live even as he lives, *in a state of self-conscious and endless existence.* Their circumstances will be happily changed, but their personal identity shall always remain, and every one of them shall know himself to be the very same individual that he formerly was, while passing through the sorrows of time. Their life shall be complete, extending to both the essential parts of their complex nature. Their mortal bodies shall be quickened, and conformed to his immortal body. Their souls shall be assimilated to his soul in largeness of intellectual capacity, perfection of knowledge, spotless purity, ardent love, and unmixed felicity. The peculiar excellence of their life, which is presently hid with Christ in God, shall be made manifest to all at his glorious appearing. It shall be derived from him in an immediate way, above our mortal conception, and incessantly enjoyed in his blissful presence. They shall have no more occasion to calculate on the probability of being removed by death, before the accomplishment of those important designs of which they obtain the distant prospect; or of being forgotten in the dust, while succeeding generations are advancing in knowledge and felicity. Without feeling any personal decay, or fearing any unfavourable change, they shall behold the yet unknown revolutions of countless millions of ages, with the cheering assurance of being for ever with their Lord, to contemplate the operations of his unwearied power, and live for ever by him. After enjoying diversified and progressive felicity for a longer period than mortals can conceive, they shall have the unspeakable satisfaction of understanding that their existence has not been wasting, and that it will never have an end. They shall pry into the secrets of eternity, with the certainty of living to witness the successive disclosures of the divine purposes; and,

in the unchangeable glory of their ever present Redeemer, they shall behold the sure pledge of their own immortality.

There are persons who would consider it a high privilege, were it possible to have their life and health protracted for a hundred or a thousand years, to afford them an opportunity either for accomplishing some important designs of their own, or of observing the changes of kingdoms, the progress of civilization, the advancement of science, the improvement of the useful arts, and the general happiness of mankind, which shall result from the promulgation of the gospel. When we see trees planted to flourish for centuries to come, or hear that the foundation of a new city has been laid, for the accommodation of generations not yet born, we cannot avoid being deeply impressed with the vanity of our life on earth, which is justly compared to a passing vapour or shadow. We look forward to a period when the long neglected treasures of nature throughout the globe, shall be fully explored; when all the unknown streams of both continents shall be traced to their source, and amply occupied; when the desert haunts of savage animals, and yet more savage men, shall be skilfully cultivated; and when the whole earth shall be subdued and replenished with enlightened and happy possessors, according to the original intention of its Creator;—but our spirit fails within us, when we consider how many generations of dying men shall be cut down as the grass, before these events can be realized. This subject might be illustrated by an attempt to contrast our present manner of thinking and feeling, while we stand in jeopardy of death every hour, with the thoughts and feelings of happy immortals, who have an endless duration of existence before them, and the sure prospect of living to fulfil every desire of their heart, and of witnessing the incessant operations of divine power; but our most enlarged views dwindle into insignificance, and our minds sink under their own conscious imbecility, when we endeavour to comprehend the importance of that ETER-

NAL LIFE which shall be derived from Christ by all that believe in him.

9. Finally, Christ is the sum of the new covenant, as his people shall obtain *a boundless unfading inheritance* in and with him. The great apostle, speaking of the blessedness which believers enjoy in Christ, says, "In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will," Eph. i. 11. There is an obvious allusion in these words, to the ancient inheritance of Canaan, which was divided to the Israelites by lot in the days of Joshua. The future inheritance of the spiritual Israel, is every way superior to the early figure of it, being incorruptible, undefiled, unfading, and heavenly. Its extent and glory cannot be fully discovered during our present state of comparative darkness and imperfection; but we have assurance that the whole shall be enjoyed hereafter, in and with Jesus Christ: for as he is the only begotten Son, and the appointed heir of God, those who obtain the adoption of children by faith in his blood, shall inherit all the inexhaustible fulness, the mighty works, and the boundless possessions of God, as joint heirs with him. Rom. viii. 17.

Jesus Christ will reign among his saints for ever, and feed them, and lead them to fountains of living water. He will grant them enlarged and interesting discoveries of the counsels of divine wisdom, and the incessant operations of Almighty power. He will conduct them to an acquaintance with the affairs of distant worlds, and make them the witnesses of his wonderful doings, in calling new systems, both of matter and of mind, into successive and endless existence. They will continue to admire all his works, and enjoy his perfections manifested by them, and take delight in all things that are his. They shall behold all the glories of the Godhead shining with unrivalled splendour in the complex person of EMMANUEL; their access to the Father through him, shall be intimate and uninterrupted;

and they shall drink of the pure fountain of life, by partaking of his ineffable felicity, and enjoying all the fulness of God in him.

But, as it is written, "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him." The disciple whom Jesus loved, who leaned on his breast in the days of his flesh, and familiarly consulted him respecting his secrets, felt himself wholly inadequate to describe either his personal glory in heaven, or the excellence of that inheritance to which he will exalt his saints at his second appearing. Hence he said, "It doth not yet appear what we shall be." Another apostle, who experienced much tribulation in the service of Christ, and who had been caught up into paradise, and thereby signally qualified for making a proper estimate of earthly and heavenly things, said, "I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us." He laboured under a heavy load of trouble, which caused him to say, "We do groan being burdened:" yet the whole appeared insignificant, when compared with the object of his hope. Therefore he said, "We faint not, for our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." The three disciples who witnessed the transfiguration of Jesus, found such delight in being with him, that they desired to remain where they were, and enjoy the vision, though on the barren top of a mountain, and encompassed with personal infirmities. Multitudes of his private disciples, who never had an opportunity for seeing him either in the flesh or in vision, have attained joy unspeakable in believing in him, though harassed with the temptations of Satan, and persecuted by wicked men. Now, if they derived greater joy from Christ than this world could yield, or they could express, when their faith was fixed on his word, in the midst of outward tribulations; who can conceive what their felicity will be when they shall behold all his glory in his

heavenly kingdom, and enjoy immediate and everlasting communion with him, far beyond the reach of all their enemies and earthly troubles? The ardent affection of fellow-creatures is sweet, especially when sanctified by divine grace, and more to be desired than all the substance of one's house; but who can form even a faint conception of the boundless love of Emmanuel, or of the exquisite pleasure which it will yield, when shed abroad in hearts completely purified from sin, and prepared for relishing it in heaven? Those who have attained the clearest discoveries and the sweetest participation of it under the gospel, when brought home to their hearts by the influence of his Spirit, have the most enlightened and enlarged expectations of the happiness which he will hereafter confer on them in the regions of bliss: yet they see their final inheritance, darkly as in enigma, and wait for the full discovery of what they see not; but when that which is perfect shall come, it will far transcend all their thoughts and desires. They shall behold all that is amiable concentrated in him, and be satisfied with his love. Then, and not till then, shall they understand the import of the consolatory declaration of the apostle, "So shall we ever be with the Lord."

1*st*, *The loving-kindness of God in giving his Son to be a covenant of the people, and a light of the Gentiles, demands our deepest gratitude.* As gross darkness had covered the earth for many generations, while the posterity of Jacob were honoured by him as his peculiar people, and favoured with the immediate revelation of his will, many of them, forgetting their natural equality with the rest of mankind, misunderstood the design of their temporary separation from the nations, and considered the religious privileges which they enjoyed, as their exclusive hereditary right. They boasted of their honourable descent from Abraham, disdained the Gentiles as worthless outcasts from God, and slighted all that the prophets had foretold respecting their general conversation in the last days. They expected

their Messiah as a national Redeemer, and desired his appearing, not to enlighten the Gentiles, or make them joint heirs with the Jews, but to honour the latter with victory and dominion. Even the apostles did not attain correct views of this subject, till their minds were enlightened by the irresistible agency of the Holy Ghost, and then they spoke of the divine purpose of calling the Gentiles to share the blessings of the gospel in common with the believing Jews, as the most wonderful mystery, which had been kept secret from the foundation of the world. Acts i. 6. Eph. iii. 1—11.

Happily neither the unaccountable ignorance, nor inveterate prejudices, nor national pride of the Jews, could frustrate the purpose of divine grace, nor prevent its seasonable accomplishment. The apostles, for a considerable time, seemed not to advert to the full extent of their commission, as the ambassadors of Christ to all the world. They could not think of preaching to the unclean Gentiles, without evident reluctance, till after Peter was directed by a special vision to open the kingdom of heaven to them, by publishing salvation at Cesarea, when the liberal effusion of the Holy Ghost put an end to their groundless scruples. An eminently laborious apostle was raised up, and appointed to proclaim the doctrine of Christ to the distant heathen nations; from that period He has continued to be the light of the Gentiles, multitudes of them have been made partakers of the promises in him, and all his saving benefits are now exhibited to us. Our gratitude to God for giving his Son to be the light and covenant of the people, ought to correspond with the inestimable value of the gift bestowed, its wise adaptation to our extreme necessity as perishing sinners, and the numberless advantages that may be derived from it. Those who have received Christ, and thereby obtained wisdom and righteousness, inward purity and peace, present joy and the good hope of eternal glory in him, are bound to contrast the happiness of their condition with the wretchedness of ignorant pagans of ancient and modern times, that

they may be excited to comply with the prophetic call which follows our text, by praising God for his abundant mercy. Isa. xlii. 8—12. Rom. xv. 8—13.

2*d*, *This should induce us to inquire whether we have obtained a personal interest in Christ, as the covenant of the people.* Although the true light has appeared to all who hear the gospel, many exclude themselves from its benefits, by preferring darkness. It has long shined around you, but have its healing beams reached your hearts? Have you perceived the excellence of Christ as the substance and marrow of the gospel? Has your attention been attracted by his matchless glory as the Sun of righteousness? Has he become the object of your superlative esteem, and desire, and delight, in preference to all the possessions and pleasures of this world? If you have indeed received him as the sum of the better covenant, then inquire what special benefits you have found in him, and actually derived from him. Have you obtained quickening and transforming grace out of his fulness, to make you new creatures? Has he taken away those carnal lusts which you formerly indulged, given you a holy spiritual frame of mind, and taught you to love himself with ardent affection, as your all in all? Remember that he imparts a new spiritual life as the pledge of eternal life, and that those alone shall share his celestial glory, who are made meet for it by conformity to his image. If he do not cause you to differ from those who are carnal, while you remain in this world, you can have no solid reason to expect that he will distinguish you from the wicked in the world to come. Many of the promises refer to this life; therefore if you do not obtain the partial accomplishment of them here, it will be vain to expect their full accomplishment hereafter. You may form a judgment of your present state and future prospects, by Rom. viii. 1—17. 2 Cor. v. 1—17.

3*d*, This shews the *reasonableness of forsaking all things for Christ, in order to win him.* This is required by Christ himself, as a thing indispensably

requisite to the enjoyment of his person and salvation. He said, "The kingdom of heaven is like a merchant-man, seeking goodly pearls: who when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it. So likewise, whosoever he be of you, that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple." Matt. xiii. 45, 46. Luke xiv. 25—33.

To forsake all for Christ, is as reasonable and profitable, as it is necessary; because nothing that sinners possess can be of lasting advantage to them if they be destitute of him. Their own imaginary righteousness can only deceive them, and leave them exposed to condemnation. The gratification of their carnal lusts pollutes their souls, their earthly possessions will speedily fail them, and their unhallowed pleasures will render their future torments more exquisite. No object is so comprehensive and desirable as Christ. Those who forsake all that they have for his sake, find that he is their Life and their Light, their Justification and Sanctification, their Saviour and Portion, their God and their All. They enjoy all things in him that are necessary to render them wise, righteous, and eternally happy. Hence, when Saul of Tarsus, who had formerly gloried in his own fleshly attainments, discovered the worth and suitableness of this blessed object, he cheerfully relinquished all that he had formerly valued, saying, "But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung that I may win Christ, and be found in him." Phil. iii. 4—10. This precious Saviour with all his fulness, is now set before us in the gospel, and we have equal reason to forsake those things to which we have been most strongly attached, that we may cleave to him as our only Saviour and everlasting delight.

4*th*, *This should excite those who have received Christ, to abide in him, and live by him, so as to derive*

daily communications out of his fulness. His benefits are not so completely imparted to his people at once, as to render them independent of future supplies; but, as the vine gradually yields its fructifying juice to its branches, he communicates his fulness to them in due season. Hence it is said, "Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. As ye have received Christ Jesus, so walk ye in him: rooted and built up in him, and stablished in faith." John xv. 4. Col. ii. 6, 7. Let it be the daily care, therefore, of all who have believed, to seek clearer discoveries of him by his word and Spirit. Make this your chief object in reading and hearing divine truth, and learn to contemplate all the several parts of it, as they stand connected with him. Draw near to the Father by him, as the only way of access, when you present your prayers and praises. Look to him continually for spiritual life and light, strength and consolation. Frequently ponder his saving offices, characters, and benefits, together with their suitableness to your particular circumstances; be strong in his grace, and take occasion from all your duties, temptations, and afflictions, to renew your application to him.

5th, Genuine believers have ground for rejoicing continually in Christ. Your situation in life may be mean and obscure, but you have a glorious Redeemer who will never be ashamed to acknowledge you as his brethren. You may feel your own unworthiness and emptiness, but you are complete in him. Your most beloved fellow-creatures may change or die, but he lives for ever, and his love changes not. You may be severely tempted, persecuted and afflicted; but he will not forget or forsake you. If in this world you have tribulation, in him you shall have peace. Learn therefore to moderate your present sorrows, and rise superior to them all by looking upward to him as your glorious Head. Compare your condition with that of the most prosperous unbelievers, think of all that he has promised to do for you at the end of your pilgrimage, and

consider what he will be to you in the world to come as your everlasting portion. Rejoice in the Lord, even in your darkest hours, for you shall soon be admitted to see him as he is, and your sorrow shall be turned into endless joy.

6th, This should impress the disciples of Jesus with their peculiar obligations to love and honour him. Remember how deeply he humbled himself, and what extreme anguish he endured for your redemption. Contemplate his celestial glory at the right hand of God, his fulness of all new-covenant blessings, his inseparable connection with you, his unceasing care for your interest, and his sure promise to come again and advance you to share his lasting felicity. All amiable and attracting qualities are found in him in unmingled perfection. Those beauties of character which distinguish his saints, and recommend them to peculiar esteem, are only the faint reflection of his image. If fervent affection be due to them in preference to the world, how much more is it due to him with whose matchless excellence all the knowledge, righteousness, and goodness of patriarchs and prophets, apostles and martyrs, deserve not to be compared! He values and desires your love, he has already done much to gain it, and he will for ever shew himself worthy of it. Let him have it therefore without any rival. Honour him with your daily thoughts, your most ardent affection, your devout praises, and steadfast obedience. Make his commandments your study and your complete rule. Receive them from him as your only Lord, and ponder the persuasive motives with which they are enforced, and shew the sincerity of your love, by keeping them to the end. "As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you: continue ye in my love. Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I have commanded you." John xv. 9—14.

PART SIXTH.

OF THE PECULIAR EXCELLENCE OF THE NEW COVENANT.

HEBREWS VIII. 6—9. *A better covenant was established upon better promises, &c.*

THE apostles considered themselves highly honoured of God in being made able ministers of the new covenant, and not of the law, which they termed the letter. The superior excellence of the new covenant, compared with that which was made with the Israelites at Sinai, is a subject with which all the disciples and ministers of Christ have need to be well acquainted; the former, that they may enjoy their privileges with becoming gratitude to their Author; the latter, that they may be prepared to magnify their office.

Having considered the matter of which the new covenant consists, and the honourable place which Jesus Christ sustains in it, the next thing proposed in the general plan, was to contemplate its *peculiar excellence*, agreeably to the words before us, in which it is termed "a better covenant, established upon better promises." To shew its superiority, it is largely and frequently contrasted with the old covenant which God made with the Israelites by the ministry of Moses. This superiority may be perceived with most advantage, if, without attempting any formal division, we *deliberately trace the contrast which is distinctly stated in various parts of the apostolic writings.*

The new covenant is better than the old, because,

1. *The old covenant consisted of strict and holy precepts: the new covenant consists of free and comprehensive promises.* We have already seen, that the former was briefly summed up in ten commandments, and that to them were added many other

precepts scattered through the writings of Moses, all of which are sometimes generally referred to as the amount of the covenant which God appointed him to ratify between Him and the Israelites in Horeb, and renew with their children in the land of Moab. Deut. iv. 13.; xxix. 1. These precepts were holy and spiritual, extending to the heart as well as the outward conduct. They demanded personal, perfect, and steadfast obedience from men, as the ground of their life and acceptance before God; and the happiness of those who sought righteousness according to the old covenant, was suspended on their continuing to do all things contained in it: "for Moses describeth the righteousness of the law, That the man who doth those things shall live by them," Rom. x. 5.

The new covenant consists entirely of promises, as the words of it plainly shew, verses 10—12. We have seen that they are of very comprehensive import, including divine justification, spiritual illumination, holy renovation, a special relation to God, the enjoyment of his fulness, and all other blessings necessary to render men truly wise and righteous in this life, victorious and perfect at last, and eternally happy in the world to come. Repentance, faith, and the obedience of love, are required as necessary to all the people of God, but he has undertaken to bestow all these upon them by the power of his grace. The blessings comprehended in this covenant, are precious in their nature, and communicated through the most expensive channel; yet they are freely proclaimed to the poor, and they shall be bestowed without reserve on all who embrace them in and with Jesus Christ. It does not direct men how to merit life by their own doings, but exhibits spiritual and eternal life as the gift of God, and sweetly disposes the heirs of promise to abound in his service, not for the purpose of procuring his favour, but as the cheerful expression of gratitude for benefits which their best righteousness could never have procured. Isa. lv. 1—3. Gal. iii. 21, 22.

2. *The precepts of the old covenant were written on*

tables of stone: according to the new covenant, the law of God is written in the hearts of his people. After God had proclaimed the ten commandments, in the hearing of all the Israelites, he wrote them on two tablets of stone, and ordered Moses to deposit them in the ark, that they might be preserved to succeeding generations. Those to whom these laws were given, did not understand their proper meaning, nor love them, neither were they sincerely disposed to obey them. Being alienated from God, they could not endure that which was commanded, and therefore they grossly violated the chief articles of his covenant, by committing idolatry, even before Moses had received all its ordinances of divine service. Their posterity manifested similar depravity of disposition, because the Lord did not give them "a heart to perceive, and eyes to see, and ears to hear." Deut. ix. 7—17.; x. 1—5.; xxix. 4.

God has promised in this new covenant, to put his laws into the minds of his people, and write them in their hearts, by causing them to understand his will, and love it, and take delight in obeying it. ver. 10. This part of the contrast before us, is stated in 2 Cor. iii. 3. "Ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ, ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God: not in tables of stone, but in the fleshly tables of the heart." He takes away the heart of stone from his people, and gives them a new heart, which is tender and susceptible. He works in them, to will and to do of his good pleasure. By shedding abroad his love in their hearts, he takes away their natural enmity, reconciles them to himself, causes them to love him supremely, makes this love their governing principle, unites them into one body by the bond of mutual affection, and thereby renders them conspicuous as the living epistles of Christ, to be known and read of all men.

3*d*, *The old covenant was the ministration of the letter: the new covenant is the ministration of the Spirit.* The former of these was called the letter, in allusion to the characters in which it was written by the finger of God, and because it was destitute of

efficacy to enlighten and sanctify them who were under it. The finger of God, by which it was engraved in stone, was an emblem of the effectual influence of his Spirit. Hence, those miracles which, in one of the gospels, are ascribed to the finger of God, are ascribed in another of them to the Spirit of God. Exod. xxxi. 18. Luke xi. 20. Matt. xii. 28.

The ministration of the letter was glorious, because it was a transcript of the holy image of Jehovah; the giving of it was attended with the most striking manifestation of his majesty and power; and by granting it to the Israelites, he honoured them above all the other nations of the earth. Deut. iv. 32—36. The ministration of the Spirit is much more glorious, as by his inward influence the perfections of God are more clearly revealed, the minds of his people are enlightened to behold his glory in the face of Christ, his love is shed abroad in their hearts, all their faculties are transformed according to his perfect image, he dwells in them as his temple, and they are enabled to hold delightful fellowship with him. 2 Cor. iii. 6, 8, 18.

4th, The old covenant discovered and strengthened sin: the new covenant frees men from the dominion of sin, and makes them to serve God with sincerity. The law enjoined perfect obedience, but it had no power to purify the heart from the love of evil, or incline it to the service of God. On the contrary, the application of it discovered those wicked lusts and practices, which would otherwise have been concealed, and cut off all hope of acceptance with God on the ground of personal righteousness; the strictness of its precepts and prohibitions powerfully stimulated all the corrupt affections and passions; and the severity of the judgments denounced by it against the guilty, tormented the mind, and thereby excited the most bitter enmity against the holy nature and dominion of God. As the light of the sun, though pure in itself, naturally increases the corruption of the dead carcases which it warms, so did the application of the law detect and exasperate the latent depravity of the flesh. By urging men to love God above all other objects, under the penalty of his aw-

ful displeasure, it filled them with hard thoughts of his character, alienated them completely from him, and made them feel that they were his positive, though impotent enemies. Hence it is said, "The strength of sin is the law. Moreover, the law entered, that the offence might abound. The motions of sin which were by the law, did work in our members, to bring forth fruit unto death. For without the law sin was dead," &c. 1 Cor. xv. 56. Rom. v. 20.; vii. 5, 7—13.

The new covenant presents an adequate remedy for the guilt and depravity of men. It reveals the riches of divine grace, through the mediation of Christ, and thereby calms their troubled conscience, cheers their mind with the hope of salvation, takes away their enmity, frees them from the dominion of their old lusts, raises their affections to God, and makes them to serve him under the constraining influence of his redeeming love. It encourages them to live to his glory, by many new motives peculiar to itself, furnishes them with competent ability, as well as inclination, to please him, establishes his law in their heart, and thereby renders his service their delight. Hence it is said, "Sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace. Ye are become dead to the law by the body of Christ: that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God. Now we are delivered from the law, that being dead wherein we were held; that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter," Rom. vi. 14.; vii. 4, 6.

5th, The old covenant gendered to bondage: the new covenant advances men to the liberty of the sons of God. The law of Moses was a heavy yoke of bondage in itself, which the Israelites were not able to bear. Its precepts were numerous, complex, and burdensome; it furnished no adequate encouragement or assistance to those who were under them; it discovered no way of free and safe access to the holiest of all; it neither inspired boldness in approaching to God,

nor conferred any title to an abiding place among his servants: it excluded transgressors from his blissful presence, and filled them wlth the dread of his insupportable wrath. Like a tyrannical schoolmaster or husband, it kept those who were under its dominion, in a state of servile restraint and fear; and fostered in them only a mercenary slavish spirit. Gal. iii. 23, 24.; iv. 1—3, 21—25, 30.

Jesus Christ voluntarily subjected himself to the authority of the whole law, satisfied all its demands, by his perfect obedience, and endured its fearful curse upon the cross, that he might redeem his people from its dominion, and advance them to an honourable state of liberty according to the new covenant. By virtue of his death as their Substitute, they become dead to the law as their husband, and attain the high privilege of being espoused to himself. Being married to the Son of God as their living husband, they enjoy the adoption of sons. Having God for their Father, they become free indeed. They are no more liable to be cast out of his house as undutiful servants, their former servile disposition is taken away, and they are made partakers of the Spirit of adoption, by which they draw near to the celestial throne with filial confidence and affection, and rejoice in the hope of inheriting all the promises. Rom. vii. 1—4.; viii. 5. Gal. iii. 25, 26.; iv. 4—7, 26—31.

6th, The old covenant was the *ministration of condemnation:* the new covenant is the *ministration of righteousness.* This part of the contrast is strongly stated in the following words: "For if the ministration of condemnation be glory, much more doth the ministration of righteousness exceed in glory. For even that which was made glorious, had no glory in this respect, by reason of the glory that excelleth," 2 Cor. iii. 9, 10. The old covenant demanded the perfect obedience of all its precepts, as the ground of acceptance with God, and denounced condemnation against all who transgressed them. Hence, it proved the ministration of condemnation to all who were under it, because they were all pol-

luted with sin. It stopped their mouths, put an end to all boasting and murmuring, shewed that they were exposed to the displeasure of the Most High, and shut them up as criminals under sentence of death. Rom. iii. 19.

The new covenant proclaims pardoning mercy to the guilty, on the ground of that righteousness which God provided for them by the substitution and satisfaction of his Son. As Jesus, who knew no sin, was made a sin-offering for their redemption, his perfect righteousness, which he completed by his obedience unto death, is freely set before them in the gospel, as the foundation of their confidence towards God; and it is actually imputed to all that believe. Being united to him by faith, they are justified by his blood, and made the righteousness of God in him. 2 Cor. v. 21.

7th, The old covenant was the ministration of *tremendous curses:* the new covenant is the ministration of the *blessing promised to Abraham.* The curses of the law were numerous and awful, being denounced by God himself against every transgressor. The Levites were commanded to pronounce them in a solemn manner in the hearing of the people, saying, "Cursed be he that confirmeth not all the words of this law to do them:" and all the people were required to acknowledge the justice of the sentence by saying, "Amen." These curses extended to all who were under the law as a covenant, because they were all chargeable with the violation of it: they attended the guilty in all the various circumstances of life, so that none could flee from the punishment which they denounced: and they included misery in all its diversified forms, as the reward allotted them by their offended Sovereign. They are calculated to convince, alarm, and humble those who trust either wholly or partially to their own works for justification; and therefore such infatuated persons ought seriously to ponder them. They are fully recorded in Deut. xxvii. 14—26.; xxviii. 15—68.

The new covenant is the ministration of the bless-

ing of Abraham, which God early intended for all the nations of the earth. This blessing was given to him by promise, and not obtained on the ground of his personal righteousness. It includes all those benefits which are conferred on men, through the atoning death of the Messiah, who descended from him according to the flesh, such as justification, adoption, the gift of the Holy Ghost, and the heavenly inheritance. Those who receive the new covenant with true faith, whether Jews or Gentiles, are thereby constituted the spiritual children of Abraham, made the heirs of promise, and blessed with the seasonable accomplishment of them. These invaluable benefits are represented as the sure mercies of David, because they result from the accomplishment of that covenant which God made with him, by promising to establish his seed for ever, and build up his throne to all generations. Therefore, when Jesus was raised from the dead, and exalted to reign for ever on Zion, as the heir of his father David; all spiritual blessings were proclaimed to the guilty in his name; and they are enjoyed under his gracious administration, by all that comply with his saving call. These things are all largely stated in Gen. xxii. 18. Rom. iv. 6—24. Gal. iii. 7—9, 13—22, 29. Acts iii. 25, 26.; xiii. 32—39.

8th, The old covenant was *the ministration of death*: the new covenant is *the ministration of life*. The law is calculated to convince men that they are dead in sin, utterly incapable of living to the glory of God in this world, or of procuring any title by their own works, to live with him in heaven. When it is applied to the conscience of the self-righteous, their former hope of the divine approbation dies within them, and they feel that they are liable to death, with all its unknown pains and consequences, as their deserved punishment. Our great apostle explained the killing influence of the law, by recording his own experience of its power. Before he attained the true knowledge of its extent and efficacy, he had considered himself alive to God, able to serve him acceptably, and entitled to a future reward; but

when it was brought home to his heart, he discovered that his natural propensities were directly contrary to it; his former hope of justification by the works of it, died; and he concluded that nothing but mercy could save him from the horrors of final condemnation. He said, "I through the law am dead to the law. I was alive without the law once: but, when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died. The commandment which was ordained to life, I found to be unto death. For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it slew me," Gal. ii. 19. Rom. vii. 9—11.

The new covenant is the ministration of life to those who were dead in sin. By the promulgation of it, when accompanied with the influence of the divine Spirit, they are quickened together with Christ, raised up from the ruins of their fallen state, and enabled to live unto God, by yielding their members to be the instruments of righteousness. It frees them from despondency, animates them for the service of their Redeemer, cheers their pilgrimage with the hope of glory, and conducts them to the enjoyment of eternal life, as the gift of God through Christ. In stating this part of the contrast between the two covenants, the apostle said, "The letter killeth, but the Spirit giveth life; for the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus, hath made me free from the law of sin and death." 2 Cor. iii. 6. Rom. viii. 2.

9*th*, The old covenant was *a message of insupportable terror:* the new covenant is *a message of peace and reconciliation.* The law was proclaimed in the most terrific manner by the voice of JEHOVAH, accompanied with thick darkness, thunder, lightening, a great earthquake, and the sound of the trumpet exceeding loud; so that the Israelites who had been assembled to receive it, cried out with fear, and fled from the divine presence. Its high demands, the curses which it denounced against transgressors, and the dreadful infliction of them, which frequently happened in the wilderness, were calculated to intimidate imperfect creatures, make them feel their inability to stand before God, and confirm their na-

tural hatred of him. While their guilty minds were agitated with the dread of sudden destruction, they complained to Moses, saying, "Behold we die; we perish, we all perish! Whosoever cometh any thing near unto the tabernacle of the Lord shall die. Shall we be consumed with dying?" Numb. xvii. 12, 13.

The new covenant is a message of peace and reconciliation between the righteous God and his rebellious creatures. It was published in a mild and encouraging manner, without any overwhelming display of majesty, by his only Son, who came and preached peace, first to the Jews who were nigh, and afterwards to the Gentiles who were afar off. Being grounded on the perfect atonement which he made on the cross, and accompanied with the kindest expostulations, soliciting the enemies of God to lay aside their unreasonable animosity, and be reconciled to him, it is calculated to allay the fear of the rebellious, humble their pride, soften their obdurate hearts, embolden them to approach his throne of grace, and for ever attract their renewed affections. The incomparable superiority of the new covenant in this respect, and its corresponding claim to the most cordial reception, were urged on the minds of the Hebrew converts in terms peculiarly striking. See the whole passage, Heb. xii. 18—24.

10. The mediator of the old covenant was an *imperfect man*, the Mediator of the new covenant is the *all-perfect Emmanuel.* Moses was distinguished by meekness and disinterested zeal, and honoured by the special interposition and approving testimony of God, as a faithful servant in all his house: Yet he was a partaker of the common depravity of human nature, which he manifested by his terror in receiving the law, and his public transgression at the rock of Meribah. He had no power to give lasting stability to the covenant of which he was the mediator. The blood with which he dedicated it, could not take away sin, nor give the Israelites an abiding interest in any divine privilege. He earnestly desired to conduct them into the land of pro-

mise; but all his importunate prayers for permission to enter it, were rejected; and he was commanded to surrender his important charge to the care of a successor, and die in the wilderness. Numb. xii. 1—10.; xx. 7—13. Deut. iii. 23—28.

The Mediator of the new covenant is in every way superior to Moses. His human nature was free from the contagion of original sin; the mighty works which he performed, proved that he was a partaker of the same divine nature with the Father; and his obedience as a servant, was most complete. He approached God with filial confidence, in circumstances peculiarly trying, glorified him on the earth by magnifying his law, dedicated the new covenant with his own blood, and secured the perpetual stability of it by becoming its surety. Having finished the work which had been appointed him in his state of humiliation, he entered the heavenly rest as the fore-runner of his people, he rules among them with unerring wisdom, and he will infallibly conduct them all to share his celestial glory. Heb. iii. 1—6.; ix. 15—28.

11. The old covenant was only an *obscure shadow;* the new covenant is the *clear manifestation of heavenly things.* The law served as the shadow of good things to come, yet it was not the very image of them. Its carnal ordinances were figures and patterns of important objects, but of a nature so entirely different from them, that they suggested only the most obscure and imperfect apprehension of their ultimate design. Hence, the Israelites remained in great ignorance of spiritual things. Many interesting parts of divine truth were hid from their minds, partly by an outward vail of carnal institutions which were not explained to them, and partly by an inward vail of blindness, which was not removed from their hearts. They were frequently called to purify themselves with diverse washings, to go up to God's sanctuary, present costly offerings, and honour the priests who ministered before him; but the mystical signification of all these ordinances remained a profound secret. Many serious per-

sons have indeed imagined that the pious Israelites understood the evangelical import of the law, nearly as well as believers do in the present age. This is a fond mistake. The law did not inform them that its rites had a figurative signification, nor call them to search after it, nor furnish them with any adequate means of drawing aside the vail. The Old Testament contains few indications of any thing like enlightened reflection or enquiry on the subject. Solomon searched after wisdom, and "spoke of trees, from the cedar-tree that is in Lebanon, even to the hyssop that springeth out of the wall; he spoke also of beasts, and of fowl, and of creeping things, and of fishes." But he attempted no spiritual exposition of the law: that theme was by far too profound for the age in which he lived; nor did his writings throw one ray of light on its obscurity. If the Israelites could have raised themselves to a man-like understanding of heavenly truth, they would have been unfit for that condition in which they were placed, as children under the elements of this world. As the way into the holiest was not made manifest to them, the multifarious and punctilious rites of outward worship occupied their serious thoughts, and engrossed their incessant attention. Believing as they did in the intrinsic excellence and perpetuity of the law and all its ordinances, their darkened minds naturally rested in the performance of what was required of them, and hence they continued mere babes in true knowledge. Heb. ix. 8—10.; x. 1. 2 Cor. iii. 13—15.

The new covenant clearly discloses the glory of God, the only way of access to his presence, and that enduring felicity which he has prepared for his chosen. By the apostolic promulgation of it, these things are revealed with "great plainness of speech;" the vail of the Mosaic dispensation is taken away, and the true signification of its figurative ordinances openly unfolded. God likewise removes the vail of blindness from the hearts of his people, and causes them to know, him from the least of them to the greatest. Blessed as their eyes, for they see the

things which many ancient prophets and kings desired to see, but did not discover. The Israelites were afraid to come nigh to Moses when he descended from Mount Sinai, because the skin of his face shone; but those with whom this better covenant is established, are enabled, with open face, to behold as in a glass the glory of the Lord, and are changed into the same image from glory to glory, by the Spirit of the Lord. Exod. xxxiv. 29—35. 2 Cor. iii. 12, 18.

12. *The old covenant had a worldly sanctuary and carnal ordinances of divine service: the new covenant advances the people of God to serve him with their spirit in his heavenly sanctuary.* The law of Moses required the Israelites to make a tabernacle for God, and furnish it in all things according to the pattern which was shewed to him in the mount. It contained minute injunctions about the consecration of Priests and Levites, and the rites which they were appointed to perform. The people were taught to consider the tabernacle as the peculiar habitation of their God, to assemble before him at set times, and honour him with a variety of sacrifices, which the priests were commanded to offer up in their behalf by the performance of many sacred rites. The sanctuary was too complex, and its ordinances were too numerous, to be described in this place; but they are all represented as worldly and carnal, beggarly and childish. They were adapted to the servile condition of an ignorant uncultivated people, of whom the greater part remained entirely carnal, earthly-minded, and far from God, Heb. ix. 1—10.

The new covenant directs the attention of them with whom it is made, to the true tabernacle of heaven, which God pitched and not man, and to the continual ministry of Christ, who entered it by his own blood, that he might appear before the Father as their high priest. Being cleansed from their sins, and consecrated priests by this blood, they are qualified to offer up spiritual sacrifices before the throne, through faith in their exalted representative. The ordinances of divine service which they are called to

observe, are all simple in their nature, wisely adapted to the dignity of a royal priesthood, and calculated to promote devout affections. In using these ordinances, they are enabled, by the influence of the Holy Ghost, to present their body to God as a living sacrifice, and to worship him in spirit and in truth, dnring the period of their earthly pilgrimage; and they have the sure prospect of being advanced, at last, to serve him day and night in his heavenly temple where they shall honour him with their whole heart, and from which they shall go no more out. Heb. x. 19—22. Rev. vii. 9—15.

13. *The privileges of the old covenant were earthly and uncertain: the privileges of the new covenant are heavenly and sure.* The genuine saints of God who lived under the law, were made partakers of justification, and other spiritual blessings, to a certain extent; yet they did not derive these benefits from the Sinai covenant, or their obedience of its precepts, but from the covenant which had been previously established with Abraham, and the influence of their faith in its promises. The heavenly inheritance, and the way of access to it, were not made manifest by the old covenant. Its precepts were enforced by far inferior privileges, adapted to the capacity of the Israelites in general. They were encouraged to be obedient to their God, by the good land which he bestowed on them, remarkable success in war, the spoil of their enemies, fruitful seasons, and the prospect of long life to enjoy their earthly possessions: "Therefore thou shalt keep the commandments of the Lord thy God, to walk in his ways, and fear him. For the Lord thy God bringeth thee into a good land, a land of brooks of water, of fountains, and depths that spring out of valleys and hills; a land of wheat, and barley, and vines, and fig-trees, and pomegranates, a land of oil-olive, and honey; a land wherein thou shalt eat bread without scarceness, thou shalt not lack any thing in it; a land whose stones are iron, and out of whose hills thou mayest dig brass," Deut. viii. 6—9.; xxviii. 1—13. Exod. xx. 12. These earthly advantages were of very uncertain and transient du-

ration. The sins of the Israelites provoked God to visit them with great and protracted calamities. In the days of the Judges they were repeatedly delivered into the hands of powerful enemies, who oppressed them; in every succeeding period of their history, we are informed that their iniquities drew down the divine judgments upon them, and at last they were carried captive out of their own land, to wander as strangers throughout the earth. Those who were truly righteous, shared the sufferings of the wicked, and the general prevalence of affliction taught them to look upward to God himself as their refuge, and long for the appearing of the Messiah to improve their condition.

The new covenant does not advance them who have an interest in it, to temporal victory, honour, and influence. It promises no earthly inheritance or secular distinctions. Instead of encouraging them to war against their enemies, and take possession of their property, it teaches them to deny themselves, take up their cross, forgive injuries, and follow their lowly Redeemer, by patiently enduring tribulation for righteousness' sake. But it reveals and imparts the most precious privileges of a spiritual kind, such as free justification, regeneration, adoption, illumination, sanctification, and divine consolation. The inheritance to which it advances them, is incorruptible, heavenly, and unfading; and the life which it confers, shall have no end. This important difference between the two covenants, is evident from the words of the new covenant itself, and from Eph. i. 3—14. 1 Peter i. 3—9. An enlarged view of this distinction may be obtained, by carefully comparing the earthly blessings mentioned in Deut. xi. and Lev. xxvi. 3—13. with the heavenly and enduring blessings enumerated in Rom. v. vi. vii. viii.

14. *The old covenant was made with the Israelites alone: the new covenant is proclaimed to all nations, and established with a peculiar people gathere dout of the whole world.* When God called the posterity of Jacob to be a peculiar people to himself, he suffered the Gen-

tiles to walk in their own ways. His covenant was neither intended for their benefit, nor adapted to their condition. The Israelites were not directed to publish it to them, nor use any adequate means for their conversion from idols to the true God. Having been chosen by him in preference to the rest of mankind, they were commanded to keep at a distance from the Gentile nations, that they might long enjoy the advantages by which they were distinguished as a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. Moses urged the consideration of their exclusive privileges, as the ground of their steadfast obedience, saying, "Thou art a holy people unto the Lord thy God: the Lord thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth. The Lord did not set his love upon you, nor choose you, because ye were more in number than any people, for ye were the fewest of all people, but because the Lord loved you, and because he would keep the oath which he had sworn unto your fathers," Deut. vii. 6—8.

The new covenant was originally intended for the benefit of all nations, and wisely adapted to their wretched condition, as ignorant idolaters, alienated from the living God, and exposed to his displeasure. The prophets foretold the general obstinacy of the Jews, and the subsequent promulgation of the divine message of peace to the isles of the Gentiles. In reply to the prophetic complaint of the Messiah, which represented his labour as vain, because Israel had not been gathered to him, JEHOVAH said, "It is a light thing that thou shouldest be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel: I will also give thee for a light of the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the end of the earth. I will preserve thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, to establish the earth; that thou mayest say to the prisoners, go forth; and to them that are in darkness, shew yourselves," &c. Isa. xlix. 1—23. Soon after the exaltation of Christ, his Spirit directed the apostles

to publish the mystery that had been kept secret from the beginning of the world, namely, that the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of the divine promises by the gospel. Multitudes of them were called by the power of his grace; his name has been great among them since that period; the message of salvation has been extensively promulgated in the present age, and in due time all the kindreds of the earth shall be blessed in him, Eph. iii. 1—10. Rom. iv. 9—18.; xi.

15. The old covenant was *weak and unprofitable:* the new covenant *perfects all those with whom it is established.* The law was weak through the flesh, or the depravity of human nature. As those who were under it, could not yield that complete obedience which its precepts required, it had no efficacy to justify them. Their numerous sacrifices could not atone the divine justice, nor take away the guilt of sin, nor purge the polluted conscience. Its figurative institutions and obscure shadows of things to come, could not enlighten their understandings, nor renew their hearts. It could not advance transgressors to a state of peace with their offended God, nor furnish support to their dejected minds in the near prospect of death. The insufficiency of the old covenant, is equally evident from the unsuitableness of its contents to the condition of fallen creatures, and from the explicit testimony of the Holy Ghost concerning it: "For there is verily a disannulling of the commandment going before, for the weakness and unprofitableness thereof: for the law made nothing perfect. For if the first covenant had been faultless, then should no place have been sought for the second." Heb. vii. 18, 19.; viii. 7.; x. 1—4, 11.

The new covenant advances men to the highest perfection of which their nature is capable. It proclaims pardoning mercy to the guilty, and justifies for ever all those to whom its blood is applied. It removes the vail of natural darkness from their minds, and causes them to know the glory of the

Lord. It brings them near to God as his beloved children, reconciles their hearts to his character, and transforms them after his holy image. It supports and comforts them under all their earthly troubles, constitutes them the free citizens of the heavenly Jerusalem, raises them to a state of honourable fellowship with the innumerable company of angels, and the spirits of the just before the throne, divests them of the slavish fear of death, and inspires them with the hope of immortal felicity. It secures the resurrection of their body at the last day, the complete perfection of their whole person in conformity with their exalted Head, and the full enjoyment of his Father's kingdom. This part of the contrast is stated at large in Heb. x. 1—22.; xii. 18—28.

16. The old covenant was *temporary and decaying:* the new covenant is *unalterable and everlasting.* The law of Moses was never intended to be perpetual: It was added to the Abrahamic covenant as a schoolmaster, to serve various important purposes, which have already been mentioned, for a limited period, with the design of being afterwards fulfilled, and honourably removed, by the Messiah, and succeeded by a better covenant. As the Israelites continued not in the covenant which the Lord made with them at Sinai, it gradually decayed, and, being ready to vanish away, it was disannulled by the divine authority. This is evident from the manner in which the prophetic promise is applied in our text: "For finding fault with them, he saith, Behold the days come when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel. In that he saith, a new covenant, he hath made the first old. Now, that which decayeth and waxeth old, is ready to vanish away." All the precepts of the law were amply fulfilled, its figurative institutions were verified, and its covenant form was honourably abolished by Christ, when he died for the redemption of his people, and dedicated the new covenant with his blood. Those who believe in him, are no longer under it as their schoolmaster or husband; but being married to him as their living head, they yield cheerful subjection to his authority, and bring forth good

fruit unto God, according to the law of love, Heb. x. 9. Col. ii. 14—20. Gal. iii. 19—26.; iv. 1—7.; Rom. vii. 1—6.

The new covenant does not wax old like the former, neither can it be ever violated nor abolished. It is frequently represented as everlasting in its nature, and the endless accomplishment of its promises is unalterably secured to all that embrace them, by the unchangeable love, the almighty power, the faithful word, and the sacred oath of God, who cannot lie. He has said, "I will make an everlasting covenant with you. For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed, but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord, that hath mercy on thee. I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them, to do them good; but I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me," Isa. liii. 3.; liv. 7—10. Jer. xxxii. 38—40. Heb. xiii. 20.; vi. 13—18. Rom. viii. 31—39. All the passages above quoted should be carefully examined.

1*st*, From this subject we may observe, that *none of the ancient Israelites obtained acceptance with God by their obedience to the Sinai covenant, but only by faith in the covenant which he had made with their father Abraham.* Those of them who followed his steps, by embracing the promise, and waiting for the Messiah, were justified and saved as he and the other godly patriarchs had been; but those who neglected the divine promise, and trusted in the works of the law, were cast out as the offspring of the bond woman, and involved in the curse. See Deut. ix. 4—7, 12—14, 25—29. Gal. iii. 6—10.

2*d*, *This shews the folly and the danger of those who rest on their own good works, as the ground of their hope before God.* If the Israelites who were under the old covenant, as their schoolmaster and husband, were justly condemned for blindly attempting to establish their own righteousness, those must be much more guilty and inexcusable, who, notwithstanding the clear revelation of the

better covenant, reject the righteousness of Christ, and "desire to be under the law." Rom. ix. 30—33.; x. 1—4. Gal. iii. 10.; iv. 8—30.

3*d*, *This should awaken the hearers of the gospel to make sure of having a personal interest in this excellent covenant.* Many impose upon themselves by commending the word of grace in a general way, without actually receiving it into their heart, or making a practical application of it. Inquire therefore, whether you have been made to understand its true value, and partake of its privileges, and enjoy communion with God as your heavenly Father, by means of it. Make it your care above all things to embrace it, as freely tendered to you in the gospel of Christ, and cleave to it through life, as all your salvation and all your desire.

4*th*, *Let us seek the influence of the Spirit of promise, to remove the vail of darkness from our hearts, and enlighten us more and more with the knowledge of the new covenant.* The vail of legal shadows has been withdrawn, and the way of salvation plainly revealed by the gospel; but the vail of inward darkness requires to be taken away, before the glory of the Lord can be perceived. The removal of this vail is the proper work of the Holy Ghost, which God has promised to give to them that ask him. Let us therefore join the daily study of the sacred records with fervent importunate prayer to him for this illuminating influence, according to the example of the holy apostles, Luke xi. 9—13. Eph. i. 17, 18.; iii. 14—19.

5*th*, *Let us live under the abiding impression of our manifold privileges, as heirs of the new covenant.* Our faith and hope, love and daily obedience, ought to correspond with our superior advantages. God has granted us much spiritual light: let us walk in the light. As we expect great things from him, let us attempt great things for the honour of his name. Moses and Joshua, David, and other Old Testament saints, were distinguished by high attainments in holy obedience, under a dispensation of divine truth and grace, which was comparatively dark and ser-

vile. What manner of persons, then, ought we to be, who have God for our portion, his promises as the sure ground of our hope, his only Son as our High Priest, the perfect example of his Son as our pattern, his Spirit as our Sanctifier, and his heavenly temple as our everlasting home?

PART SEVENTH.

OF THE WAY IN WHICH MEN OBTAIN A PERSONAL INTEREST IN THE NEW COVENANT.

HEBREWS X. 38. *Now the just shall live by faith.*

WE have seen that the new covenant is wisely ordered in all its parts, sure in all its promises, in the highest degree worthy of its divine Author, and every way adapted to the condition of guilty helpless men: but as it is effectually established with God's spiritual Israel alone, and others obtain none of its saving benefits, it is of much practical importance to ascertain the precise means by which sinners attain a personal interest in it. To this part of our general plan our attention is called by the text.

After the author of this Epistle had clearly evinced the superior excellence of the new covenant, by contrasting it with the law of Moses, he proceeded to apply his doctrine to the hearts of the converted Hebrews, by exhorting them to draw near to God by that new way of access which Christ had consecrated, and to hold fast their gospel profession, by steadfastly associating for the advancement of their mutual love, and patiently waiting the second coming of the Lord to complete their salvation. To induce them to comply with his exhortation, he put them in remembrance of the fervour of their first love, commended their former zeal in suffering with joy for the sake of Christ, and direct-

ed them how to continue steadfast to the end, notwithstanding the tribulations to which they were exposed, by saying, "Now the just shall live by faith."

The words before us are quoted from Hab. ii. 4. As the events announced by the prophet, were at a considerable distance, he called his contemporaries to wait for them with patience, in the full assurance of their accomplishment at the appointed time; and informed them, that those who faint in the day of evil, or stagger at the divine promises on account of adverse appearances, and become weary in waiting for them when they are long delayed, thereby shew that their heart is not right with God; for his genuine people live by their faith. Their faith renders them just in his sight, purifies their hearts from evil thoughts and affections, brings their minds under the influence of new principles, supports them under all their troubles, animates them for the service of God, and enables them to delight in him and his word, while they quietly wait for its seasonable accomplishment. The text stands closely connected with the doctrine of the better covenant, contained in the foregoing chapters; it shews how sinners obtain a personal interest in it, and at last enjoy the accomplishment of all its promises.

In attempting to illustrate this necessary subject, I shall,

First, Prove that it is by faith alone that a personal interest in the new covenant is obtained.

Second, Explain the nature of gospel faith.

Third, Assign the principal reasons why the benefits of the new covenant are obtained by faith only.

I. *I shall prove from the Scriptures, that it is by faith alone that sinners obtain an interest in the new covenant.* That the proofs which are to be produced, may be rendered intelligible and convincing to the weakest capacity, it is necessary to observe, that various other terms of similar import, are frequently

used by the sacred writers, to denote faith. It is often called *believing* or *being persuaded*, as in Rom. iv. 3, 5, 20, 21. It is also signified by *resting*, *trusting*, or *confidence* in the Lord. 2 Chron. xiv. 11. Ps. xxxvii. 3, 7.; cxviii. 8, 9. Heb. iii. 14. Faith is likewise figuratively represented by *looking* to Jesus for salvation, *receiving* him, *coming* to him, *eating* his flesh, *drinking* his blood, *abiding in* him, and being *rooted* in him. Heb. xii. 2. John i. 12.; vi. 35, 50—58.; xv. 4, 7. Col. ii. 6, 7.

As all these terms are of similar import, we may fairly reason from those passages in which any of them occurs, as well as from those in which the word faith is expressly mentioned: and as all the blessings of this covenant are inseparably connected with each other in Christ Jesus, so that the person who enjoys any one of them necessarily obtains an interest in all the rest, we may also reason from those testimonies in which the actual possession of any of them is ascribed to faith, as equally conclusive on the subject. Agreeably to these preliminary observations, the following topics of proof are submitted to consideration.

1. It is by faith that sinners obtain *union and communion with Christ.* This is affirmed with abundant clearness in many such passages as the following: "He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him: As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father: so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me. I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God. Christ may dwell in your heart by faith." John vi. 56, 57. Gal. ii. 20. Eph. iii. 17. Col. ii. 6—13. As Christ is the Mediator and the Substance of the new covenant, it must be admitted that the same faith which advances men to a state of inseparable union and communion with him in all his saving offices, relations, and fulness, necessarily gives them an interest in all the promises of that covenant.

2. The *great salvation* that Jesus Christ bestows,

is obtained by faith alone. When the keeper of the prison of Philippi, "fell down before Paul and Silas, and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved? they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." Again it is said, "By grace are ye saved, through faith." It is obvious that this salvation includes all the blessings of the covenant in question. Acts xvi. 29—31. Eph. ii. 8.

3. It is by faith alone that *sinners are justified before God.* This is frequently asserted as one of the fundamental doctrines of the gospel. "Being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus; whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation, through faith in his blood,—that he might be just, and the justifier of him who believeth in Jesus. Therefore we conclude, that a man is justified by faith, without the deeds of the law." Rom. iii. 21—28. Gal. ii. 16.; iii. 6—9. As pardoning mercy is one of the great comprehensive blessings of the new covenant; therefore those who are justified by faith, become partakers of all its other benefits by the same means.

4. It is by faith that men become the *children of God.* "But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name. For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus." John i. 12. Gal. iii. 26, 29. Those who by their faith obtain the privilege of adoption, enjoy a new relation to God as their heavenly Father, they have an unalterable interest in all his glorious attributes, and become heirs of all his promises.

6. It is by faith that *the hearts of men are purified from sin, and renewed in love,* according to the divine law. "God put no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith. Now the end of the commandment is love, out of a pure heart, and out of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned. Faith worketh by love. We have known and believed the love that God hath to us. We love him, because he first loved us." Acts xv. 9. 1 Tim. i. 5. Gal. v. 6. 1 John iv. 16, 19. God promised

in the covenant, to write his law in the hearts of his people, that, being rendered like himself, they might be prepared for serving him in sincerity; enjoying fellowship with him, and relishing all the spiritual benefits which he bestows. Faith renews their heart in love after the image of God, by receiving grace for that purpose out of the fulness of Christ, by apprehending the divine love as it is manifested in him, and bringing all the powers of their minds under the transforming influence of those sacred truths which it embraces and daily keeps in view.

6. Faith renders those who are partakers of it, the *heirs of a glorious resurrection to eternal life.* We have seen that these things are included in the new covenant, and that they constitute a most important part of its contents. Now, many explicit testimonies shew, that they are freely tendered to all who will believe in Christ, and obtained only by faith: "This is the will of him that sent me, that every one who seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life, and I will raise him up at the last day. Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me hath everlasting life." John vi. 40, 47, 54.; iii. 15—18, 36.

II. As God establishes his new covenant with his people by making them partakers of faith, *let us proceed to contemplate the nature of genuine gospel faith.*

Faith in its common signification, denotes the belief of what is said by any person worthy of credit; or the reception of his testimony, as the evidence of things not seen, or otherwise known, to be true. As God speaks to us in the gospel on many subjects highly important in their nature, deeply interesting to ourselves, and far above the reach of human discovery, we ought to believe all that he says concerning them, in the same manner as we believe the words of an upright fellow-creature; for "if we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater," and consequently more worthy of all acceptation. 1 John v. 9.

As the gospel of Christ is the immediate ground of faith, and true faith denotes the unfeigned reception of it, and corresponds with it in all things, as the image impressed on the wax corresponds with that which was on the seal, we may be assisted in ascertaining its precise nature, and avoiding all mistakes and extremes on the subject, by considering in what the gospel consists, and keeping its full import in view, as we proceed. *The gospel includes a sure record of facts, a declaration of truths, an exhibition of precious benefits, importunate invitations and expostulations respecting them, and faithful promises of good things, adapted to the condition of those to whom it is addressed.* It records the humble birth, the public ministry, the perfect obedience, the manifold sufferings, the ignominious death, the triumphant resurrection, and the celestial exaltation of Jesus Christ. It declares the most important truths respecting his person and offices, mediation and salvation. It openly exhibits Christ, and all his fulness of grace and glory, as the free gift of God to a perishing world. It invites the guilty and helpless to come to Christ for spiritual and everlasting rest. It expostulates with those who spend their labour in the pursuit of empty vanities which cannot afford lasting profit, and kindly entreats the enemies of God to lay aside their enmity, and be reconciled to him. It holds forth sincere promises of justification and adoption, renewing grace and eternal life, not as the reward of any human merit, but as the gift of divine grace through Jesus Christ, to all who will accept of them, by taking the Lord at his word, and judging him faithful who has promised. All these things are so largely stated in the New Testament, that it would be superfluous to quote particular passages in confirmation of them.

Now this plain account of the gospel, which is generally admitted, ought to be kept in view in all our inquiries concerning the faith of it. We should bear in remembrance the authority of its divine Author, the heavenly blessings which

he has proposed, the character of the persons to whom they are proclaimed, and the gracious manner in which they are exhibited to them, that we may ascertain how they ought to be apprehended and received: for as faith naturally corresponds with the gospel as its proper foundation, and *receives the whole of it without exception*, it would be very incorrect to subdivide the gospel into separate parts, and then convert the supposed reception of one or more of these into a sort of legal condition, entitling the person to apply and enjoy its remaining parts and privileges.

There is an inseparable connexion between gospel faith and all the other graces of the Spirit, which result from its influence, as the proper effects and fruits of it, such as hope, and joy, and love: but all these and similar gracious affections, must be carefully distinguished from it, otherwise the simplicity of its nature cannot be understood. As this faith is entirely simple in its nature, it ought never to be divided into imaginary parts, nor represented as consisting in a combination of various different acts or operations of the mind. When faith is personified, and described as putting forth successive acts in order to salvation, its true nature is rather darkened than elucidated, and the minds of serious inquirers are rather perplexed than instructed. All those figurative passages which speak of it under the notion of coming to Christ, eating his flesh, and drinking his blood, should be explained agreeably to the obvious meaning of other texts which treat of it in a literal and explicit manner. Yet, as those things which are simple in themselves, may be advantageously illustrated, by shewing their various aspects toward the several objects with which they stand connected, the precise nature of christian faith may be most clearly perceived, if we consider its peculiar relation to all the different parts of the gospel, and the manner in which it receives the whole of them without reserve; or the way in which it equally embraces its recorded facts, doctrinal de-

clarations, free invitations, and faithful promises of spiritual blessings, agreeably to the form in which they are exhibited in the word.

More particularly, we may observe, that,

1. Genuine faith receives the gospel with *spiritual understanding*. It is self-evident, that none can really believe what they do not in some degree comprehend. The ignorant may profess their belief of the Bible in general, as the words of God, or of some human creed, supposed to be founded on it; but except they have distinct apprehensions of the truth as it is in Jesus, their belief is only an empty name, which can neither change their hearts, nor give them an interest in any spiritual blessing. Such is the blindness of the carnal mind, that it cannot perceive the true nature of divine things, without supernatural illumination: "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him, neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. But he that is spiritual discerneth all things." The carnal Jews understood not the heavenly doctrine of Christ, though he spoke as no mere man had spoken, because their minds were blinded. Hence he said, "No man can come to me, except the Father draw him. It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh to me." 1 Cor. ii. 14, 15. John xii. 37—40.; vi. 44, 45.

When God begins to draw sinners to himself, he graciously apprehends them by his Holy Spirit, opens their understandings to discern heavenly things, shines into their hearts, gives them the light of the knowledge of his glory in the face of Christ, and thereby enables them to apprehend him and his truth in return. They are made to understand somewhat of the personal dignity of Christ, the nature of his offices, the perfection of his work, his ability to save them, the suitableness of his benefits, and the free access that they have to partake of them. They know what they are called to believe,

and the reasons why they ought to believe. Thus Jesus represented the faith of his first disciples as the result of divine illumination, and encouraged them to preach his gospel to others, by promising to send down his Spirit to convince the world, and render their labours effectual. Matt. xi. 25. John xvi. 7—11.

2. True faith receives the gospel with *divine assent.* To assent to any testimony, is to yield to it, and be convinced by it, as competent evidence of what otherwise is not known. This is plainly affirmed and exemplified in Heb. xi. 1, 3. "Now faith is the evidence or conviction of things not seen. Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen, were not made of things which do appear." Many assent to the truth of certain facts and doctrines of the gospel, on the ground of human authority or tradition. They believe these things, merely because their neighbours believe them, and boldly assert them. In the same way do mahometans believe the dogmas of their false prophet, and the heathens believe the traditions of their priests respecting the various objects of their worship. This is human faith, or the belief of man, and it must be carefully distinguished from christian faith, which is justly termed divine, because it is the belief of God: it is grounded on his testimony, and not merely on the uncertain testimony of man. It may be promoted by the scriptural instructions of enlightened teachers; but it does not rest on their authority. It looks beyond them to God, apprehends him speaking in the gospel, and assents to the truth of all that he declares therein, because he cannot be deceived concerning what is truth himself, neither can he lie or deceive his creatures. Sinners cannot be justified by assenting to the dictates of the most intelligent and pious men respecting the gospel; but only by receiving it as the immediate testimony of the Most High, which he addresses to them from heaven. His people know his voice, in distinction from that of men; and, in yielding an implicit assent to it, they set to their

seal that he is true. This belief of God is essential to saving faith; and accordingly it is said, "For this cause also, thank we God without ceasing, because when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but, as it is in truth, the word of God, You, by him, do believe in God that raised him up from the dead, and gave him glory, that your faith and hope might be in God." 1 Thess. ii. 13. 1 Peter i. 21.

3. Christian faith receives the gospel with *cordial approbation.* The gospel is not a system of abstract principles, which have no immediate relation to the condition of those to whom it is addressed. It bears in the most direct manner on their character, their duty, and their chief interest; nor can their minds be seriously occupied about its intrinsic importance, without at the same time perceiving its aspect toward themselves. Hence, many admit its general truth, who turn away from the particular contents of it with disgust. They understand and believe as much concerning it, as makes them to hate it, on account of its opposition to their carnal lusts and prejudices. They dislike the character of the Redeemer, and secretly despise various parts of his deportment, as incongruous with his high office, according to their ideas of propriety. Being little affected with their natural depravity and wretchedness, as helpless sinners, his gracious declarations frequently offend them. His salvation does not correspond with their wishes: they do not consider their condition so dangerous, as to require certain parts of it; and the spiritual blessings which he tenders, do not suit their corrupt taste, nor seem adequate to render them happy. Many things that they read in the gospel, excite in their breast the painful feeling of disappointment and aversion. They cannot endure sound doctrine, and therefore they turn away from it to fables. They are offended in Christ. This is their condemnation, that light is come into the world, and they love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil. John iii. 19, 20. Luke iv. 16—29.

When God imparts genuine faith, he brings down the lofty imaginations of the heart, and produces a conviction of the incomparable excellence, as well as the truth, of what he reveals. Being well pleased himself with the person and work of his beloved Son, he shews all those who are under his tuition, that they have abundant reason to be perfectly satisfied with all that he said, and did, and suffered on their account; and with all the benefits which result from his mediation. He begets in them a full persuasion, that the whole plan of salvation is worthy of his divine wisdom, and righteousness, and grace; —that it is exactly adapted to the necessitous condition of guilty and depraved creatures;—that it is every way calculated to render them truly happy, and accomplish all the other important purposes which were intended by it;—and that it admits of no possible improvement from the wisdom of man. He convinces them of the necessity and suitableness of all the parts of his great salvation, and of the reasonableness of counting all human attainments in wisdom and virtue, as loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ, and forsaking all things of an earthly kind, to win him. He teaches them to approve all those parts of his word which formerly excited their proud aversion, and to wonder at the perverseness of their former ignorant prejudices. This persuasion of the intrinsic excellence, and practical utility of the gospel, is essential to saving faith in it, and the immediate cause of that ardent love of divine truth which naturally results from faith. Philip. iii. 7—10.

4. Faith receives the gospel with *unfeigned confidence.* This denotes a firm persuasion, that its divine Author is sincere in all his gracious declarations, and that he will do what he has said. Those who are made partakers of it, believe that Christ is willing, as well as able, to save them to the uttermost; and they trust in him, and in the Father through him, for all the benefits of his mediation, as they are freely tendered to the poor, who have no personal worth to recommend them. They take

God at his word, and rest their eternal interest on the truth of it, believing that he will never disappoint their expectation, nor put them to shame.

This confidence must be distinguished from all the effects or fruits of faith, and also from that personal knowledge of a gracious state before God, which results from the consciousness of possessing these fruits. The confidence of an enlightened hearer of the gospel, does not consist in believing what he is in himself, or in forming a good opinion of his spiritual condition and attainments, in which he might possibly be self-deceived; but it consists in believing what the Lord graciously declares and exhibits to him in common with others.

The apostolic account of faith, shews that it includes the confidence of obtaining those good things which God has promised as the object of hope: "Now faith is the substance, or *confident expectation*, of things hoped for." "For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence." Heb. xi. 1.; iii. 14. The apostle used the same word to express his confidence of obtaining a liberal contribution from the churches of Achaia. 2 Cor. ix. 2, 4. As faith looks upward to an unseen God and Saviour, and backward to the important facts which are recorded in the gospel history, so it looks forward to the future accomplishment of the promises which Jesus confirmed by his death.

The necessity of awakened sinners requires this positive confidence. Feeling as they do, that they are utterly depraved, and exposed to everlasting destruction, a general belief in the existence of a Saviour of others, and the mere possibility of their own salvation, might produce anxious concern about the attainment of the benefits desired, and the distressing fear of probable disappointment, but it could never appease their accusing conscience, nor put them in possession of that rest to their agitated minds, which Christ has undertaken to bestow on all who come to him.

As the gospel contains glad tidings to the guilty and wretched, it furnishes the most abundant and

solid foundation for the confidence in question. It exhibits Christ and his great salvation as the gift of God, like the manna which was freely granted to the Israelites in the wilderness. Addressing persons who were evidently in a state of sin, Jesus said, "My Father giveth you the true bread from heaven. For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him, should not perish, but have everlasting life." John vi. 32.; iii. 16. The gospel represents Christ as graciously inviting guilty men to come to him for rest, to open the door and receive him, to partake of his benefits without reserve, and be reconciled to the Father through him, with assurance that they shall not be cast out, or put to shame: "Come unto me all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me. Let him that is athirst, come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely. And him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out. Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed." These and similar words furnish suitable encouragement for confidence in Christ; they evidently require it; nor can any thing less correspond with their meaning and design. Matt. xi. 28. Rev. iii. 20.; xxii. 17. John vi. 37. Rom. ix. 33.

This confidence is essential to that faith with which men are directed to pray for salvation. It is said, "Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed?" The manner in which those who pray ought to believe, is explained by himself: "Jesus saith to them, Have faith in God. What things soever ye desire when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them." Mark xi. 22, 24.

Nothing short of confidence could produce those pleasurable and gracious affections which are represented as the immediate effect of faith, such as hope,

and joy, and love. Hence it is said, "whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory. Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope through the power of the Holy Ghost. We have known and believed the love that God hath to us. We love him besause he first loved us." 1 Peter i. 8. Rom. xv. 13. 1 John iv. 16—19. While the awakened soul remains in dark suspense about its eternal interest, it can neither hope, nor rejoice, nor love. Its overwhelming anxiety must be painful in proportion to its impression of the vast importance of what it considers in a state of awful uncertainty. As the prospect of approaching destruction produces the distressing emotion of fear in the minds of unbelievers, and excites their enmity against their offended Creator, whose wrath they can neither resist not endure; so confidence in his loving kindness and precious promises through Christ, produces the contrary emotion of hope, fills them with spiritual joy, mollifies their formerly obdurate hearts, and constrains them to love their God and Redeemer with complacency and gratitude.

The faith by which the saints of former ages obtained a good report, included confidence. That of the patriarch Abraham has special claims to our attention, as the approved example which all his spiritual children ought to imitate. He trusted in God for the accomplishment of his promises, notwithstanding the great apparent difficulities which attended them, and rendered the desired event contrary to human probability: "Against hope he believed in hope, according to that which was spoken: and being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead, when he was about an hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sara's womb. He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God." Rom. iv. 18—25. Sarah also had confidence in the divine promise, and obtained a son

when she was past the usual age, "because she judged him faithful who had promised." If all the examples of faith which are recorded in Heb. xi. be carefully reviewed, in connexion with the more full account of them which is given in the Old Testament, it will be found that the confidence of obtaining good things to come, on the ground of the faithful promise and almighty power of God, was conspicuous in every one of them. Surely no illustration of faith could be more appropriate, and no proof of the necessity of that confidence which is pleaded for, could be more satisfactory or convincing, than that which was given for the express purpose by the Holy Ghost.

Unbelief, which is the opposite of faith, denotes distrust or lack of confidence. The land of Canaan was set before the Israelites in language strikingly similar to that in which Christ and salvation are tendered to sinners by the gospel; yet the word did not profit them, because they staggered at the promise. They were not censured for refusing to assent to the reality of former facts concerning which God had spoken to them by Moses; but they were excluded from the good land, because they were destitute of the confidence of obtaining what he had promised. They admitted that JEHOVAH had redeemed them from Egypt, and given them his law from mount Sinai; but they did not trust in his divine love, power, and faithfulness. Moses said unto them, "ye are come to the mountain which the Lord our God doth give unto us. Dread not, neither be afraid. The Lord your God who goeth before you, he shall fight for you, according to all that he did for you in Egypt before your eyes. Yet in this thing ye did not believe the Lord your God." Deut. i. 8, 20—35. Heb. iii. 6—19.; iv. 1, 2.

5. True faith receives the gospel with *growing steadfastness.* It differs entirely from any variable opinion or barren speculation. That kind of faith which proves inactive and temporary, is only feigned and nominal. It is dead and utterly unprofitable, even while it seems to continue; and in the

time of temptation the outward appearance of it fails. James ii. 14—26. John xii. 42, 43. Luke viii. 13.

Genuine faith lays hold on the fulness of Christ, finds pardon in his blood, and receives his grace in time of need. It leans on his almighty power, and is thereby supported to the end of life. Though altogether empty and unassuming in itself, it performs wonders through him. It grows in its extent, by progressively apprehending the different parts of the sacred word, as their meaning is unfolded by the Holy Spirit. The manifold trials and difficulties by which it is assailed and exercised, are overruled as the means of increasing its strength. It gradually becomes able to endure strong temptations without being greatly agitated or shaken, and frequently prevails over all opposition, by growing up to a full assurance. This faith is of the same practical utility to the soul, that a new organ of sense would be to the body. It introduces those who are made partakers of it to an intimate acquaintance with the unseen world, gives them delightful fellowship with its blessed inhabitants, substantiates eternal realities, and brings the heart under their beneficial influence, 2 Thess. i. 3—10. 2 Cor. iv. 10—18.

III. Having ascertained the nature of faith, *let us consider the principal reasons why it is by faith alone, that sinners obtain a personal interest in the new covenant and all its precious privileges.* The following reasons may be assigned for this appointment:

1. *Fallen men are utterly incapable of procuring a title to spiritual blessings by their own works of righteousness.* "All have sinned and come short of the glory of God." They are depraved in heart, and destitute of either ability or inclination to satisfy the claims of justice for their past offences, or recommend themselves to the divine favour, by yielding future obedience corresponding with the demands of the perfect law. The Scriptures represent them as

lost, without strength to extricate themselves from deserved punishment, and in a state of absolute dependence on sovereign mercy. Now, as there are only two conceivable ways of obtaining spiritual benefits, namely, by working what is good, according to the demands of the law, to procure a due reward; or believing in him that justifies the ungodly: as the former of these is for ever closed against all who are polluted with any degree of sin, such persons must perish in their guilt, except they be saved by faith alone, without the deeds of the law. Rom. iii. 19—23.; iv. 4, 5. Gal. iii. 10—14.

2. *Faith corresponds best with the nature of the new covenant as a dispensation of free promises.* The old covenant consisted of precepts; therefore working corresponded best with the nature of it, as the only thing that could satisfy its demands. Hence, the practice of steadfast obedience was strictly enforced by repeated injunctions and awful threats: "Moses describeth the righteousness which is of the law, that the man who doeth those things shall live by them." We have seen that the new covenant does not consist of precepts to be obeyed, but of promises to be believed. Therefore faith agrees best with its nature; and without faith, the end of it cannot be attained. Those who believe the promises, thereby make them their own, and effectually secure the accomplishment of them; but those who refuse to believe, make God a liar, and exclude themselves from the benefits tendered in his faithful word. These things are distinctly stated in Rom. x. 4—11. Gal. iii. 12, 21, 22. Heb. iv. 1—3.

3. *It is only by faith that the promises are rendered equally accessible and sure to all the spiritual seed of Abraham.* When God established his covenant with the patriarch, he constituted him the heir of the world, made him the father of many nations, and promised to be a God to him, and to his seed after him, in their generations. These promises had a subordinate reference to his natural posterity, and the land of Canaan, which was given for their inheritance; but they had an ultimate re-

ference to his spiritual seed, whom God intended to gather out of all nations, to enjoy an eternal inheritance in heaven. Now, if obedience to the law had been required as the means of procuring an interest in the promises, the Jews, who were zealous of the law, would naturally have claimed a preferable title to it, and the idolatrous Gentiles, who were destitute of all righteousness, must have been excluded, and the promise rendered of no effect as to them. Such, indeed, was the mistaken opinion that many of the Jews formed on this subject; and therefore they were highly displeased when the Gentiles were admitted to partake of the blessings of the gospel, in common with themselves, without any distinction; but the apostle, to convince them of their error, observed, that God had justified their father Abraham through faith, even before he was circumcised, and thereby proved, that justification and the heavenly inheritance are equally free and accessible to Jews and Gentiles, so that whosoever will, may obtain the blessing, simply by walking in the steps of the faith of Abraham: "For the promise that he should be the heir of the world, was not to Abraham, or to his seed through the law, but through the righteousness of faith. For if they who are of the law be heirs, faith is made void, and the promise made of none effect. Therefore it is of faith, that it might be of grace; to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed." This argument is largely stated in Rom. iii. 29, 30.; iv. 9—17.; x. 2—12.

4. *Faith excludes all boasting or glorying on the ground of personal merit.* All boasting on the part of creatures, especially fallen creatures, is most unseemly in itself, and highly offensive in the sight of God; because, in proportion as they exalt themselves, they dishonour the sole Author of all that is good. If men could procure an interest in the blessings of the new covenant, by doing more for God, or bringing better offerings to him, than others, they would naturally boast of their success, as the result of superior diligence and worth, even though they might pretend to thank him for making them to differ from the wicked. In this manner the

proud pharisee thanked God that he was not like other men, while he proclaimed his own righteousness as the ground of his confidence before him, and despised the penitent publican; but his blind presumption exposed him to deeper abasement. Luke xviii. 9—14.; xv. 2, 25—30.

Faith does not pretend to offer any valuable consideration to God, as an equivalent for his benefits. It is a poor, empty, lowly grace: Having nothing to offer worthy of the divine acceptance, it gladly receives the indiscriminate proclamation of mercy and salvation to the wretched and worthless, and sweetly disposes those who are partakers of it, to take their humble station among the chief of sinners who embrace the same promises, without murmuring on account of their admission to share the same privileges, or claiming any superiority on the ground of imaginary personal goodness. This reason for the appointment of faith was given by the apostle: "By grace are ye saved through faith; not of works, lest any man should boast. Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? of works? Nay: but by the law of faith." Eph. ii. 8, 9. Rom. iii. 27.

5. *The glory of the wisdom, righteousness, and grace of God, is most advanced by bestowing spiritual blessings on guilty men through faith.* He intended to manifest the exceeding riches of his grace, by quickening those who were dead sin in and children of wrath, raising them up together with Christ, granting them the adoption of children to himself, and making them heirs of his celestial glory. He manifested his righteousness, by exacting satisfaction to all the demands of law and justice from his beloved Son, and by bestowing justification, together with all other necessary blessings, through his obedience unto death. He manifested his wisdom, by choosing a certain determinate number of the human race to himself, predestinating them to salvation before the foundation of the world, contriving a way of complete redemption for them, gradually discovering his design to the fathers, and at length

skilfully accomplishing it, in a manner equally honourable to himself, beneficial to his chosen, and wonderful in the estimation of the principalities and powers of heaven. Now, faith corresponds with this illustrious design of God, and advances it much more than any works of human righteousness could have done. It glorifies divine grace, by cordially receiving the invaluable benefits which it bestows, and acknowledging it as the sole cause of them. It glorifies the righteousness of God, by trusting in that complete propitiation, through which he is just, and the justifier of the ungodly who believe in his Son. It glorifies his faithfulness, by assenting to the truth of his testimony on subjects that surpass human comprehension; and resting the eternal interest of the soul on the stability of his promises. It glorifies his wisdom, by disposing all who are partakers of it to relinquish their own counsels as foolishness, to submit their understanding to the dictates of his gospel, and accept of Christ as the wisdom of God, and the power of God unto salvation. It fills their hearts with profound reverence for him, holy admiration of his attributes, gratitude for his astonishing kindness, and ardent desire to shew forth his praises. Rom. iii. 24—26. Eph. i. 3—8.; ii. 4—7.; iii. 8—11.

6. *Faith realizes the joy of salvation without delay.* If the blessings of the new covenant had been tendered to men as the reward of personal labour, and if the practice of strict obedience to the end of life, had been required as the only means of procuring an interest in them, every serious candidate for salvation would have had to accomplish his protracted task under the influence of anxious desire and tormenting fear, without the possibility of attaining solid joy till his work was accomplished, in consequence of the hazard of ultimately losing both his labour and his soul, through the power of some future temptation. It is evident, that in proportion as men are taught to trust in their own will, and the works which result from it, their obedience is rendered mercenary, the issue of it uncertain, and their minds un-

comfortable. In opposition to this servile plan, God has furnished the heirs of promise with abundant ground for immediate and strong consolation. He has spoken to them in his holiness, and confirmed his promises with his oath; therefore all that believe them, may rejoice in the certain hope of their accomplishment. Their faith naturally produces peace and joy in proportion to the extent and stability of it. Their comfort, instead of being suspended on their personal attainments in holiness, arises out of what they discover in the word of truth, and believe, as sincerely exhibited to them in common with other sinners. The primitive disciples, whose minds had not been perverted by mistaken theories of religious experience, rejoiced in Christ from the moment in which they first believed. 1 Pet. i. 8. Acts xvi. 29—34.

7. *Faith brings the hearts of men under the transforming influence of divine truth, and thereby prepares them for entering on the full possession of all that is promised in the covenant.* God bestows his favours in a progressive manner, by gradually preparing the hearts of his people for relishing them, and making suitable returns for them. As nothing unclean can enter the heavenly rest, he purifies them from sin, causes them to hate it, and teaches them to cleanse themselves from it. As he has undertaken to manifest his righteousness, at the last day, by rendering to every one according to the deeds done in the body, it is necessary for his people to be distinguished from the rest of mankind, by their good works. As Christ overcame this world, and the prince of it, before he was exalted to his glory, his people must also fight and conquer before they be advanced to reign with him. Now, it is by faith alone, that these and similar effects are produced. Faith is the impenetrable shield, that quenches all the fiery darts of the wicked. It overcomes the world, weans the heart from the love of it, and brings all the affections under the influence of divine and heavenly things. It elevates the thoughts of the christian, renders him spiritually-minded, transforms his na-

ture after the image of God, causes him to abound in works of righteousness and benevolence, supports him under the troubles of his pilgrimage, and makes him willing to be absent from the body and present with the Lord. The more faith he possesses, so much the more holy he becomes, the more he is animated for the service of Christ, and prepared for enjoying the pleasures, and taking part in the employment of the blessed, who are before the throne of heaven. 1 John v. 3—5. Col. ii. 6—13.; iii. 1—5. 2 Cor. iv. 13—18.; v. 1—17.

1*st*, This shews, that *the doctrine of salvation by faith, instead of making void the law of love, effectually establishes it.* It is by the spirit of faith that God inscribes this law in the hearts of his people. Genuine faith brings the soul under the influence of the most holy and transforming principles; receives sanctifying grace, and animating consolation, out of the fulness of Christ; produces new and heavenly affections; and powerfully disposes all who are partakers of it, to live to him who died for them, and serve him in a spiritual manner, of which no self-righteous unbeliever is capable. Those who think otherwise, and reproach the doctrine of salvation by faith alone, as if it were conducive to sloth and licentiousness, do not understand either the law or the gospel. Rom. iii. 31.

2*d*, *This shews how the disciples of Christ ascertain their personal interest in the new covenant.* They do not derive their first comfort from what they feel in themselves, but from what they believe. That faith, however, through which they obtain peace, by looking directly to the almighty Redeemer, abides in them as their renewing principle: the holy tempers and good works which result from it, gradually become apparent; and they discover thereby, that Christ, who was formerly exhibited to them in the gospel, is now formed in their hearts the hope of glory. The fruits of their faith manifest its divine origin; and from their experience of a good work of grace begun in them, they justly conclude, that God

has made them partakers of his promises, and appointed them to inherit eternal glory. In this manner did the primitive disciples know that they were the children of God; their peculiar privileges were urged on their minds, as the ground of their grateful obedience: nor is there a single instance to be found of a true believer, who continued through life in dark and melancholy uncertainty respecting his state. It was in consequence of a theory of religion essentially different from the doctrine of the apostles, that serious men were taught to admit the truth of the New Testament, and yet continue for years under the bondage of perplexing doubts about their interest in salvation. 1 Thess. i. 3—6. 1 John ii. 3—14.; iii. 9—19.

3*d*, *This should excite the hearers of the gospel to inquire whether they have obtained that precious faith which lays hold on the new covenant.* "Examine yourselves, whether you be in the faith; prove yourselves: know ye not your own selves?" Have you ever been deeply convinced of your unbelief, and the fearful condemnation to which you were exposed thereby? Have you obtained the clear knowledge of the gospel method of salvation, and the principles which men are commanded to believe? What particular passages of Scripture were powerfully applied to your mind to enlighten it, and persuade you to forsake all for Christ, and trust exclusively in him? What particular objects of your former confidence and affection have you forsaken, that you might win him, and be found in him? On what part of his word were you enabled to hope toward God? What advantages have you derived from the Redeemer since you first applied to him for salvation? Has your faith produced peace within, and produced an abiding change of sentiment, disposition, and practice? Have you become dead to the world, and spiritually-minded? Do you love Christ in sincerity, and make the enjoyment of his salvation the object of your prevailing desires? Have you begun to worship God daily in spirit and in truth, and honour him in all things, by perform-

ing the ordinary duties of life, under the influence of his word abiding in your heart? By impartially and repeatedly applying these and similar questions, you may ascertain whether you be in the faith, or still disapproved.

4th, This should induce those who are in painful suspense respecting their state, to repent and believe the gospel without delay. Except you can answer the foregoing questions in a satisfactory manner, it will be at the extreme peril of your soul, if you continue to flatter yourself, by imagining that there may still be some imperceptible principle of a gracious kind concealed in your heart. Genuine faith does not remain inactive: it lives, works effectually, and bears down all opposition. If therefore you have hitherto deceived yourself with a dormant and nominal faith, you ought to repent while the Lord waits to be gracious. Change your mind respecting your condition and conduct; admit the salutary conviction of your guilt and danger; make inquiry about the way to life, and attend to the gospel as if you had never before heard it; because you have never as yet received it into your heart. Contemplate the person and work of Christ, as they are plainly set before you in his word, and apply his gracious calls as the ground of your confidence, that you may be quickened and raised up together with him by the faith of the operation of God.

5th, The heirs of promise should make it their chief care to grow in faith, as the effectual means of abiding peace, growth in grace, and suitable preparation for heaven. If you have attained experimental and scriptural evidences of a personal interest in the new covenant, take heed of turning away from Christ, by attempting to live on the small portion of his grace which you have already received, or of making it the ground of your future comfort. You have not believed his gospel in vain: therefore continue to believe as when you first asted his grace, by so doing. As you have therefore received Christ Jesus, so abide in him, and live by him, till you become established in faith and love. Imitate our great

apostle, by forgetting the things that are behind, and apprehending Christ more completely in all his states and endearing relations, that you may enjoy abundant fellowship with him in his sufferings, resurrection, and celestial glory.

PART EIGHTH.

OF THE MOTIVES BY WHICH THOSE WHO HAVE HITHERTO CONTINUED STRANGERS TO THE NEW COVENANT, SHOULD BE PERSUADED TO EMBRACE IT WITHOUT DELAY.

JEREMIAH l. 5. *Come, and let us join ourselves to the Lord, in a perpetual covenant that shall not be forgotten.*

THOSE who have been truly convinced of their sins, and aroused to flee from deserved wrath, to that Refuge which God has set before them, can no longer be indifferent about the spiritual condition of their former friends and companions, who still remain in a state of guilt and blind security. Having tasted that the Lord is gracious, and obtained the cheering hope of eternal life, they ardently desire that the objects of their affection should be convinced of their alienation from God, awakened to a proper feeling of their danger, and effectually persuaded to unite with them in seeking the Lord, and securing an unalterable interest in his promises. Being fully determined in their own heart, to comply with the voice of mercy, while it is proclaimed to them from heaven, they importunately entreat others to come along with them and partake of the waters of life. The gracious disposition and practice of such persons, correspond with the spirit of our text.

It is not to be doubted, that these words had a subordinate reference to the restoration of the Jews

from their captivity of seventy years in Babylon, accompanied with a remnant of the ten tribes of Israel. Soon after Cyrus the king of Persia had taken the city of Babylon, and subdued the enemies of the Jews, the Lord stirred up his spirit to proclaim liberty to his captives to return to the land of their fathers, and rebuild his house at Jerusalem. Those of them who feared the Lord, were deeply affected with shame and sorrow for those sins which had provoked him to forsake his temple, and deliver his chosen city into the hands of the Chaldeans: yet they rejoiced because he had remembered his promise by the prophet Jeremiah; granted them favour in the sight of the heathen, and called them to "remove out of the midst of Babylon." As those who accepted the proclamation of liberty, journeyed with penitent hearts from the place of their late captivity, asking the way to Zion, with their faces thitherward, that they might restore the temple and its ordinances; they persuaded and encouraged each other to seek the Lord their God, saying, "Come, and let us join ourselves to the Lord, in a perpetual covenant that shall not be forgotten." Agreeably to their laudable purpose, as soon as they reached Jerusalem, they set the altar of God upon its bases, honoured him with sacrifices, restored his temple, dedicated it with joy, turned from their former iniquities, and entered into an oath to walk in the law which he had given to their fathers by Moses. These things are amply recorded in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah.

But notwithstanding this partial accomplishment of the promise before us, we have reason to believe that it has a farther reference, to a far more general restoration and conversion of the house of Israel and Judah, in the last days. The remnant of the ten tribes, that returned from captivity, and joined themselves to the house of Judah, in the days of Ezra and Nehemiah, was extremely small and inconsiderable, and consequently not answerable to the strong language of the promise. The covenant which they made, was soon violated; therefore we may con-

clude that the perpetual covenant mentioned in the text, was the same with the new and everlasting covenant which God had formerly promised, by the same prophet, to establish in the days of the Messiah. Jer. xxxi. 31.; xxxii. 40. Hence, the interesting passage before us, will admit of being applied to all God's spiritual people under the gospel, for their instruction, excitation, and mutual encouragement in joining themselves to the Lord. According to this view of our text, it lays a proper foundation for the two succeeding parts of our general plan; namely, *motives* to enter into covenant with God, and *directions* for so doing.

I shall therefore attempt,

First, To persuade those who have hitherto been strangers to the new covenant, to embrace it for themselves without delay:

Second, Direct serious inquirers how they ought to enter into covenant with God: and,

Third, Remove certain stumbling-blocks, by which the success and comfort of such persons, are frequently hindered.

I. Permit me affectionately to persuade those who have hitherto continued strangers to the new covenant, to embrace it without delay, by the following motives:

1. Come now and join yourselves to the Lord, because *he is infinitely greater and more excellent than all other gods.* Mankind are empty and needy creatures, entirely destitute of ability to guide, defend, and provide for themselves: therefore they find it necessary to have a God in whom they may place their trust. The truth of this has been generally felt and acknowledged in every age. All nations have had their gods, whom they have honoured, not only with magnificent temples, costly offerings, sacred rites, and the attendance of numerous priests: but even with their confidence, veneration, and ardent attachment. They have earnestly implored their interposition in the season of distress; praised

them as the author of deliverance and success; made their boast of them in preference to all others, and manifested the fervour of their devotion, by enduring excruciating torments, and even death itself in their service. The ancient heathens, of whom we read in the Scriptures, did not hesitate to violate the strongest dictates of nature, by burning their tender offspring in the fire, for the purpose of doing homage to their gods: and the heathen of modern times are so tenacious of their established customs, that multitudes of them lay down their life as a sacrifice to the object of their religious veneration. Yet all the gods of the nations are vanity and a lie. Being totally ignorant of the blind zeal of their worshippers, they neither hear their prayers, nor accept their multiplied services. They can do no good, neither is it in them to do evil. They are as destitute of all other divine perfections, as of knowledge and power; and the qualities commonly ascribed to them by their deceived votaries, are evil and detestable. "The Portion of Jacob is not like them: for he is the Former of all things; the JEHOVAH of Hosts is his name. The Lord is the true God: he is the living God, and an everlasting King." His existence is underived and independent, without beginning or end, succession or change; and his presence fills immensity: his understanding is infinite, and his eyes equally behold all things, visible and invisible, throughout heaven and earth, from the greatest to the most minute. His almighty power, which created the universe at the beginning, incessantly upholds it without fainting or becoming weary. Having made all things for himself, he ever continues their undisputed Possessor, and fully enjoys all the beauties and riches, secret wonders, and grand revolutions of nature. He governs his intelligent creatures by laws adapted to their capacities and circumstances, with the most perfect wisdom, righteousness and mercy. His matchless perfections are frequently contrasted with the opposite qualities of all other gods, in language becoming himself, and

worthy of our devout contemplation. See for example, Jer. x. 3—16. Isa. xl. 12—28.

Now, as dependent creatures must have a god of some kind, consider how much better it is to be joined to the Lord of Hosts, than to a dumb idol; to worship him who can both hear and answer prayer, rather than gods that sleep and cannot be awaked; and to have your heart fixed on him rather than perishing vanities. He is ever near to pity and deliver them who trust in him, and grant them delightful communion with himself. His special kindness is better than life; his goodness may be seen in all his works, and enjoyed in every situation. Deliberately survey the wonders of his creating power around you, which fill the whole earth, and adorn the skies: the sagacity of man cannot compute their number, nor ascertain their vast extent: how great and glorious, then, must their Author be! Are not those a happy people who have this God as their own God and Saviour, their everlasting Father and Portion? Would you not consider it the highest honour and felicity to have a personal interest in his favour, to be the object of his delight, and the heir of his divine fulness? Is this your sincere and prevailing desire? Come then, join yourself to the Lord; and all shall be yours.

2. *Remember that God has graciously made a covenant of which you may take hold.* Human wisdom is not adequate to frame a covenant, meet to be established between the infinite JEHOVAH and any of his creatures. The natural apprehensions of men are so gross, and their affections so carnal, that any plan which they could devise, would neither accord with the honour of the divine perfections, nor provide effectually for their own spiritual interest. Being fallen and rebellious creatures, they have no title to propose the terms of reconciliation with God, and it would be highly presumptuous for them to make the attempt. They could have no ground to hope, that he would accept and sanction any covenant of their proposing; for as he is the justly offended party, he has an exclusive right to fix the

terms on which he will admit them to the enjoyment of his favour; and being the supreme Lord of the universe, the possibility and the means of their restoration, depend entirely on his sovereign will. Therefore, if they had been left to their own resources, the establishment of any amicable relation between him and them, would have been altogether hopeless. But happily there is no necessity for any covenant of man's composing, for God has already established a covenant of his own. The plan of it originated in his infinite mind, before the creation of man, or of the dust out of which he was formed. His merciful design was gradually disclosed to the fathers by the prophets, as we have already seen; and when the fulness of the time arrived, the new covenant was revealed by the Messiah, ratified with his atoning blood, and amply recorded in the writings of his apostles.

If, therefore, you desire to be joined to the Lord, you have no occasion to prepare any covenant for the purpose, and no room for blundering in the adjustment of the terms: you may approach without fear of presumption in the attempt, or disappointment as to the issue of it. By the commandment of the everlasting God, his covenant is published to all nations for the obedience of faith; and to you is this word of salvation sent. Having brought it near by the gospel, he calls you take hold of it, and his kindness in so doing should remove your guilty fears, and encourage you to comply. Isa. lvi. 6, 7. Rom. xvi. 25, 26.

3. *Consider how wisely and completely the new covenant is adapted to your condition.* Having been framed by God himself, it is worthy of his matchless skill and goodness. It advances his own declarative glory in the highest conceivable degree, meets all the necessities of those for whom it was intended, and amply secures their best interest. Reflect seriously on your own particular case, observe what its circumstances require, and deliberately weigh the superabundant provision which he has set before you.

Are you guilty of numberless sins, and liable to condemnation? This covenant contains a promise of divine pardon and justification, which can never be reversed. Are you ignorant of spiritual and heavenly things? It furnishes you with comprehensive and sound instruction. Are you blind and foolish? It supplies divine illumination, and exhibits Jesus Christ as made of God for wisdom to all who receive him. Are you far from God in your state, and alienated from him in heart? Here he addresses you in words of peace, which invite you to draw near and be reconciled to him. Do you feel timid and afraid to approach a God of terrible majesty, in whose sight the heavens are not clean, and before whom the holy angels vail their faces? Remember that this covenant is proclaimed to you through his own Son, as the Mediator of it, who by his atoning blood entered the holiest of all to minister for ever as the Representative and Advocate of all that come to the Father by him. He has promised the aid of the Spirit to help your infirmities, and enable you to address the throne of grace with filial boldness, crying, Abba, Father. Are you wholly depraved in heart, and unfit for the service of God? He has promised to take away the heart of stone, bestow a new heart of flesh, and write his law therein. Are you weak, and much exposed to malicious, formidable enemies? The strength of the Lord is everlasting: "he giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might, he increaseth strength." If you embrace this covenant, Christ will be your invincible Leader; you may be strong in him, and glory in your own infirmities, that his power may rest on you. Are you empty and poor in spirit? In this covenant the unsearchable riches of Christ are proclaimed to you that you may be complete in him. Are you afflicted and cast down? Its promises furnish abundant consolation, and Jesus has kindly undertaken to send down the Holy Ghost as a Comforter to apply them to your heart. Those who have God for their portion can never be desolate. In circumstances of the greatest adversity

and distress, they have ground to rejoice in what he is to them, and what he will do for them. Are your thoughts, affections, and resolutions variable; and do you feel that you are prone to depart from God, forget his promises, and violate his laws? The stability of the covenant does not depend on the fluctuating frame of the creature, but on the unchangeable love, the faithful word, the sacred oath, and almighty power of its divine Author; who has said, "I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them to do them good, but I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me." Do you look forward with painful apprehension to the approach of death, when your earthly tabernacle shall be laid aside and reduced to corruption, and your soul introduced into the world of spirits, to exist in a new unknown manner? Remember that JEHOVAH is not the God of the dead, but of the living, and all his people continually live to him, and under his peculiar care. When they pass through the dark valley of the shadow of death, he affords them seasonable comfort, makes their spirit perfect, and advances them to a state of felicity before his celestial throne. Their very dust sleeps in Jesus, and continues precious in his sight. He will raise them up in glory at the last day, and give them eternal life. Have you large and boundless desires, which nothing earthly or temporal can satisfy? This covenant comprehends a portion which can neither be limited nor exhausted. It sets before you all the diversified works, and all the infinite fulness of the Godhead. It exalts men to the highest dignity of which their nature is capable, presents objects calculated to yield the most exquisite and lasting pleasure, and furnishes them with enlarged enduring capacity for enjoying all things. Angels could not require more, nor can any thing greater or better be conceived, than the endless fruition of God himself.

In short, whatever your infirmities, distresses, and necessities may be, the provision of the new covenant will be found more than answerable to

them all. Bring this matter to the test of observation and experience. Take a full view of all the aggravated sins of your life, and all the inveterate plagues of your heart; weigh all the painful burdens under which you groan, ponder all the dangers to which you are still exposed; compute the number, variety, and value of the benefits which you need to render you truly safe and enlightened, holy and for ever happy: compare your most enlarged view of these things with the promises of the covenant, and you will be convinced of its suitableness and sufficiency: you will be constrained to acknowledge, that it admits of no possible improvement, and that it has every conceivable claim to your most cordial reception.

4. *Remember that the new covenant and all its invaluable privileges, are tendered to you in the most gracious and encouraging manner.* You have no reason to question your immediate access to them, for they are proclaimed in a general indiscriminate way to all who hear the gospel. They are exhibited under the emblem of a great feast made unto all people by the Lord of hosts; and the hungry destitute poor, the maimed and the blind, the weary and heavy laden, the guilty and rebellious, self-righteous hypocrites, and the openly profane, are all equally invited without exception; and whosoever will, may partake, and be satisfied with the divine goodness.

As this invitation is unrestricted, it is completely free; no meritorious conditions or preparatory qualifications, are required: those who have no money, may buy and eat, without money and without price. The Author of this gospel feast, has made ample provision for cleansing away the filthiness of the guests, and clothing them with spotless robes in which they may appear before him with honour and satisfaction, notwithstanding their former nakedness: hence, they may come forward as they are without delay, having only to accept and use what he has prepared for them. Indeed they can never render themselves more worthy of him; and by keeping at

a distance to make the fruitless attempt, they shew only their perverseness and folly.

The heavenly invitation is presented in a very warm and pressing manner. God condescends to expostulate with the guilty and wretched respecting the grounds of their backwardness. He calls them to reason with him about his gracious designs. He even entreats them to enter his house, and directs his servants to compel them by their affectionate importunity to comply with his kind solicitation. To cut off all occasion for the fear of rashness or presumption in coming, he interposes the authority of his high command, and thereby gives them assurance, that their approach will not be accounted obtrusive, and that he will neither upbraid their necessity, nor reject their claims as burdensome, Isa. xxv. 6.; lv. 1—3.; i. 18. Luke xiv. 16—23.; xv. 20—28.

Now this generous invitation is presently addressed to you, whatever you have hitherto been, as much as to any other sinners. Could you desire greater encouragement? or conceive of any thing more kind and attracting on the part of your offended Creator? Ought you not then to yield to the voice of mercy, and join yourself to the Lord without delay by receiving all that he has set before you in his well-ordered covenant? With what eagerness would the condemned criminal accept the pardon of his prince, or the oppressed captive embrace the proclamation of liberty! But how much more cordially ought the justly condemned slave of sin and Satan to accept the divine proclamation, not of pardon and liberty only, but of a heavenly inheritance and unfading glory!

5. *Reflect on the comparative insignificance of all those things that can be set in opposition to this covenant.* There is no other god that can be compared with the Lord, or that deserves to be either trusted or feared; therefore you have no temptation to forsake him, and prefer any of the vanities of the nations, like the ancient Israelites.

But perhaps you love earthly things rather than

God, and desire to enjoy the possessions and pleasures of time, as more congenial to your natural inclinations. Remember, however, that these things cannot be obtained freely, like the blessings of the gospel; for the acquisition of them requires much care and labour: neither can your utmost exertion procure the immediate enjoyment of them, for much of your time may be consumed in the pursuit of what you desire, whereas the joy of faith may be attained in the present hour, simply by believing. Before you resolve to prefer earthly things, it will also be your wisdom deliberately to count the cost which necessarily attends the inordinate pursuit of them. Our Lord, who well understood the terms, said, "What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul? Supposing you should engage in the unrestrained pursuit of earthly things, and attempt to forget the ruinous consequences, all your efforts might terminate in disappointment; for multitudes who neglect the gospel, and violate their conscience for the sake of this world, never attain any considerable portion of it. The bubble which they prefer, eludes their grasp, and they spend their days in wretchedness. But though you should prosper in your carnal pursuits, and arrive at wealth and greatness, these things, instead of satisfying your heart and giving rest to your mind, would prove only the occasion of unknown vexation of spirit, as king Solomon discovered by painful experience. Besides, the prosperous worldling is exposed to the sudden and unavoidable loss of his beloved, but inadequate portion. Now, supposing you should attain as much terrestrial happiness as your heart can desire, how little would it avail, if God should suddenly demand your soul, and call you to give account of your stewardship? Could you review your former successful course with approbation? or take pleasure in surveying your portion of good things for once only, with the prospect of beholding them no more for ever? How could you endure the pang of such a separation, after

slighting the enduring blessings of the new covenant, for the sake of momentary and criminal gratification? Would you not despise those vanities that had so fatally blinded your mind, allured your affections, and involved you in bitter and endless remorse?

But others may reject this covenant on grounds very different from the conscious preference of earthly things. They do not consider their natural condition so bad, nor their necessity so great, as to require all that it tenders to them. They admit that they have occasionally been chargeable with slight aberrations from the path of duty; but they believe that their heart is good, that it requires no radical change, and that their own righteousness is sufficient to recommend them to the approbation of the Almighty. Hence they will not submit to a plan of justification, which tenders the righteousness of faith to all the hearers of the gospel, without distinction, as lost sinners, puts an end to every degree of boasting, and calls the most serious and strict to trust in sovereign mercy, as well as the openly wicked. Do any of you feel disposed to establish your personal righteousness as the ground of your acceptance and of your hope before God? Or do you at least desire to have it joined with the finished work of Christ, and acknowledged as a reason why God should bestow spiritual and eternal blessings on you in preference to the ungodly? Do you account it too hard and too mortifying to take your place with the chief of sinners at the foot of the cross, and cry for mere mercy as one of the vile and helpless? Or, if pardoning mercy be in some degree necessary even to you, do you still conceive that your many good qualities, give you a superior claim to it in preference to those who have been less circumspect? Before you conclude, that your own righteousness can make any important difference between you and other sinners in the sight of God, be persuaded fairly to examine the extent of it, and the proportion which it bears either to the demands of the divine law, or the amount of your guilt. What have you ever done

either for the honour of God, or the benefit of man, in which you can justly boast? Compare your good deeds with the extent of your obligations, the benefits that you have received from the Author of your being, the advantages with which you have been favoured above many others, and the opportunities that you have neglected. Can your righteousness endure to be weighed in the balance against your sins? Or do you think it could be admitted as sufficient compensation for any one of them? From what principles and affections have your good deeds proceeded? If they have not resulted from unfeigned love to God, they can be of no value at all; or rather, they must be utterly unclean and vile. If you imagine that you ever loved God by nature, you are altogether self-deceived. His word affirms, that the carnal mind is enmity against him, and charges the whole human race with wilful rebellion; therefore your pride in thinking otherwise, shews that you have not yet become reconciled to him. The old pharisees were blameless in their own eyes: yet the Lord abhorred their hypocrisy. If you revolve in your mind the holy and spiritual nature of that obedience which he demands, you will perceive, that you never loved him sincerely, nor performed one duty that could entitle you to his regard: you will discover what Saul of Tarsus discovered when the law was applied to his heart, and be convinced, that the slightest degree of dependance on your own works and worth, would only be to add blind presumption to your former rebellion; and that your case requires all the abundant provision and rich grace, which God has set before you in his covenant. Be persuaded, therefore, to count all your imaginary goodness loss and damage, that you may win Christ, submit to his perfect righteousness, and enjoy all those benefits of his death, which are as necessary to your condition as they are freely offered in the gospel.

But there are some who do not object against being justified freely by divine grace, only they have no desire to be renewed by grace, and contin-

ually employed in the service of God; nor can they reconcile their minds to a covenant which bestows salvation as a free gift, while those who embrace it are called to forsake their former evil practices, and yield their members to be the instruments of righteousness. They desire to continue in sin that grace may abound, or at least to indulge in spiritual sloth, without crucifying their lusts, and perfecting holiness in the fear of God. If this correspond with your feelings, you are still in darkness, under the dominion of sin and Satan. Did you understand the intrinsic evil of sin, you would esteem it a high privilege to be freed from the degrading bondage of it. Did you know the love of God, you would account his service the most honourable freedom, and delight in pleasing him. The way of transgressors is hard, and its end is death. The divine life, light, and grace of the new covenant, are able to take away your natural aversion to duty, to root out your carnal propensities, and make true holiness your element. Those who know the felicity of walking with God in love and new obedience, consider the restoration of his image as an essential and most excellent part of salvation. They understand that holiness and happiness are inseparably united in his divine nature, and that none can enjoy lasting felicity, except in proportion as they are renewed according to his likeness. Make it your care, therefore, to weigh all your objections in an even balance, that you may perceive how insignificant they will appear at the end of life, and be excited to renounce every prejudice, and cleave to the Lord in a perpetual covenant.

6. *Remember that those who reject the new covenant shall be more awfully punished at last, than the ancient Israelites were who violated the old.* The law required its transgressors to be put to death without mercy, and various examples of punishment were recorded for our warning. The idolatry of the golden calf exposed the whole assembly of the Israelites to immediate destruction, and, notwithstanding the successful interposition of Moses on their

behalf, about three thousand were slain with the sword. The blasphemer, and the man that gathered sticks on the sabbath day, were stoned to death, and multitudes were slain on other occasions. Exod. xxxi. 14.; xxxii. 27—29. Lev. xxiv. 10—16, 23. Numb. xv. 30—36. Deut. xiii. 6—15.

On the ground of these judgments, the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews, expostulates in the most impressive manner with those who neglect or dishonour the gospel: "For if the word spoken by angels, was steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompence of reward; how shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord. He that despised Moses law, died without mercy, under two or three witnesses: of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the spirit of grace?" Heb. ii. 2, 3.; x. 28, 29.

Here an appeal is made to the natural dictates of conscience, reason, and equity; and the disobedient are called to judge themselves, by estimating the amount of punishment which their conduct deserves, and anticipating their future sentence. Be persuaded, therefore, deliberately to review the threats which were denounced by the law, and the impartial severity with which the transgressors of it were punished. Having pondered the awful but just recompense which they received, reflect on the far more aggravated guilt of those who hate the light of the glorious gospel; and consider of how much sorer punishment those shall be thought worthy, who neglect the message of the Son of God, treat his divine person with indignity, reject the covenant which he published, contemn his precious blood with which it was ratified, despise the heavenly inheritance which he opened to his disciples, resist the striving of the Holy Ghost, make the God of truth a liar, disdain his greatest kindness, and pro-

voke his fiery indignation. The final punishment of unbelievers is neither fully described in the scriptures, nor capable of being comprehended by mortals; but enough is said to give us assurance of its severity. If therefore you be tempted to make light of the gospel, and to indulge the hope that you shall have peace, though you walk according to the imagination of your own heart, consider seriously how you can endure to take your place before the throne of judgment, among the most wicked and degraded of the human race; to have all your secret sins, with their aggravations, disclosed before the universe; and to see the heathen rise up with you, and condemn you, as far more worthless than any who never heard of a Saviour. How will you blush before your former acquaintances, who witnessed the religious advantages which you disregarded, and saw you prefer the sordid gratification of your lusts, above all the blessings of God's covenant! How will you be able to behold the face of that glorious Judge, whose dying love and gracious calls you formerly slighted,—to bear his awful frown, from which nothing can possibly hide you,—and hear his righteous sentence condemn you to dwell with the devil and his angels in everlasting fire, because you would not comply with his merciful invitation, to come to him and live? What account will you then make of your unbelief and hardness of heart, or of those corrupting pleasures to which you are now fatally attached? Will the remembrance of your former criminal gratifications in any degree diminish your distress? Will not the recollection of guilty joys for ever lost, rather add to your anguish? With what poignant grief will you bewail your folly, in selling your birth-right for a "morsel of meat;"—in relinquishing the enduring felicity of heaven for the momentary pleasures of sin! You find it no difficult thing at present to cast off the fear of destruction, and listen to the gospel of peace with cold indifference; even when others around you are awakened and converted by it, you remained unaffect; their faithful remon-

strances do not alarm you, nor do their affectionate invitations to partake with them, in the least attract you: But what will your thoughts and feelings be in the day of the Lord, when you see them clothed with immortal glory, and advanced to places of lasting dignity in the kingdom of heaven, if you be shut out, and cast into hell! You will know the unspeakable worth of Christ and his salvation in that day; but if you then begin to weep before him, and cry for mercy, he will laugh at your calamity, and mock at your helpless distress. To what source of relief and comfort will you turn in that hour of shame and consternation? All the heirs of glory will disown you, and approve your fearful sentence. Your earthly kindred will be incapable of interposing between you and destruction, or of alleviating your sorrow. Your old companions in guilt and impenitence, will begin to upbraid you for encouraging them to offend, and involving them in more insupportable misery. You may cry to the mountains and rocks to fall on you, and hide you from the wrath of the Lamb; but they will remain as little moved by your mournful solicitations, as you formerly were by the voice of the gospel. You shall then know the proper signification of the worm that dieth not, and the lake of fire, burning with brimstone, which shall never be quenched. You shall know the precise place of that hell which you once despised, and understand the various modes in which torment shall be there inflicted. But there will be no stoical apathy among the damned; and the scoffing of the proud sceptic shall cease for ever. The presence and indignation of Almighty God, shall be realized with abiding and insupportable horror. There will be no room for dissipation of thought in the region of darkness and despair; the wit and ingenuity of the lost will yield no relief, and no agreeable objects or changes will be perceived by them, to engage and entertain their minds. When those who now pursue the business and the pleasures of the world, with a degree of eagerness which allows them no time for the service of Christ, take their merited place among the heirs of

wrath, and lift up their eyes in a state of torment, they shall find leisure for serious and sad reflection. But who, in this mortal life, can form any adequate conception of the melancholy cogitations, the fruitless wishes, the mutual reproaches, and helpless wailings that shall incessantly occupy those who obey not the gospel! "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."—Lay these things to heart, and "see that ye refuse not him that speaketh; for if they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from him that speaketh from heaven."

7. Finally, *remember that now is the time appointed by God for embracing his covenant.* Were a messenger of peace dispatched from heaven to proclaim its promises to the spirits which are already in prison, and invite them, as we are presently invited, to receive them all freely, we cannot question their readiness to welcome such a joyful sound, and accept the mercy proffered to them, on any possible terms. Having already experienced the commencement of their punishment, they cannot any longer doubt of its reality, nor despise that heavenly felicity which they formerly neglected and lost. On entering the eternal world, they firmly believe all that the Scriptures testify concerning it; but their faith is of no advantage to them, because the proper season for believing is past. The blessing is not promised to them who first see, and then assent when they can no longer resist the force of conviction; but to them who hear the gospel, and voluntarily believe it, on the ground of the divine faithfulness. Death will equally put an end to thoughtless indifference, and sceptical uncertainty, about the future state of retribution; but the present life is the only period during which God shews long-suffering towards transgressors, and invites them to seek his favour, with the promise of acceptance in so doing.

But although salvation be graciously exhibited to all who accept and believe the gospel at any time before the termination of their mortal course, it is extremely unwise and dangerous to resist the voice

of mercy, and indulge in spiritual sloth, in the hope of finding a more convenient opportunity for the great business of religion at some future period. If, therefore, you feel in any degree disposed to adopt the language of the sluggard, and to say, "Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep;" yet a little indulgence, before all the pleasures of sin be forsaken for ever: —remember that God has given you no assurance of protracted life, to be spent in the service of your lusts: your health may be unimpaired, your constitution robust, and your earthly prospects encouraging, when he is about to frustrate all your purposes, by saying, "Thou fool, this night shall thy soul be required of thee!"

But how little would it avail to have your natural life protracted, if your heart were hardened? Many gospel hearers, after being apparently serious for a time, have stifled conviction, grieved the divine Spirit, and become entirely callous. The guilt of such unpersuadable persons is fearfully aggravated by their fruitless resolutions to become the true followers of Jesus at some convenient future period, and their eternal state will be much more intolerable than that of the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah. With what unutterable anguish will they remember, when the door of hope shall be for ever closed, how very near they once were to salvation, how easily they might have attained it, and how foolish those excuses were which tempted them to delay! How contemptible will the momentary gratification of their wicked passions then appear! They will loathe what they most ardently loved, and abhor themselves for their inexcusable obstinacy. The serious warnings and gracious calls which they resisted, the artful sophistry with which they opposed the light of truth, and deceived themselves; the sins which they committed, and the unsubdued lusts which they indulged, will all combine to render their wretchedness more insupportable.

If you admit the duty and propriety of seeking the divine favour before you appear in judgment, to

receive you eternal sentence, be persuaded to do so immediately, and count the time past of your life more than sufficient for the service of the flesh. Now the Lord speaks to you in mercy, and bows his ear to hear your cry. "He says, I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succoured thee; behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation. Wherefore, as the Holy Ghost saith, to-day, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your heart." Reflect on the melancholy example of the Israelites, who rejected the promise when they were called to enter the land of Canaan, and thereby provoked God to swear in his wrath that they should not enter into his rest. Their subsequent confession of sin and proffer of obedience, availed nothing; the happy time for believing the promise, and doing the will of God, had passed away for ever. His oath could not be recalled. Their unseasonable boldness was presumptuous, and they were put to shame by enemies whom they might easily have conquered, had they not provoked the Lord to forsake them. They returned and wept before him, but he would not hear them. They found no place for repentance, though, like Esau, they sought it carefully with tears. They lost a goodly temporal inheritance by their unbelief; but all the unfading glories of the heavenly inheritance, are set before you in the gospel, and you may secure the everlasting enjoyment of them in the present hour, by embracing the new covenant: but if you do not immediately comply, you cannot sincerely purpose to do so at any future period: for to delay the reception of the divine promise, is to reject it; and if you provoke the Lord by such temerity, he may swear in his wrath that *you* shall never enter into his rest. Deut. i. 19—45. Heb. iii. 7—19.

I shall conclude, by recommending the new covenant to the immediate attention of the following particular classes:—

1*st*, To *the young*. Your Creator is presently calling you to remember him without delay, before the

days of trouble come, in which you can find no pleasure. The gracious Redeemer, in the days of his ministry on earth, said, "Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God. And he took them up in his arms, put his hands upon them, and blessed them." If you had been present on that occasion, do you think that you would have implored his favour, saying, Lord, I come unto thee: receive me also, and bless me? He lives and reigns now, in unspeakable glory at the right hand of his Father, where all the angels of heaven esteem it their honour to serve him; but his kindness towards the young remains unchanged. His all-seeing eye is presently upon you for good, and his ear is accessible to your prayers. He loves all those who love him, and promises that they who seek him early shall find him. Be persuaded, therefore, to take hold of his faithful word, and join yourself to the Lord, through his mediation, in a perpetual covenant. If you be early removed from this world, he will comfort you in passing through the gloomy vale of death, and receive you into the kingdom of his little children in heaven, where no sorrow can ever enter. If your life be prolonged, you will have the best opportunity for advancing in knowledge, growing in grace, abounding in usefulness, and securing a more abundant reward at last, than those who spend their early years in sin. Your natural powers are fresh and vigorous, and the gospel furnishes the most noble subjects of contemplation to exercise and improve them. Your affections are warm and susceptible—they require a suitable object; and no other can be so worthy, or so capable of satisfying them, as Christ and his salvation. Give him your heart, therefore, without reserve, and thus begin without delay to be truly happy. He will guide you through the snares of youth, make you a blessing to others while you live, and advance you to inherit all things with himself for ever. Take heed of being led astray from him by the enticement of improper companions: consider how little their transient and cor-

rupting pleasures, will do for them at the hour of death: ponder the seasonable counsels of divine wisdom, and act accordingly. Attentively read Eccl. xii. Prov. i. 7—33.; viii. 17—36.

2. *To those whose minds are chiefly occupied with the business and the pleasures or cares of this world.* The world is a formidable, insidious, and daily adversary to the soul. It engrosses the attention, entangles the affections, blinds the conscience, chokes the good seed of the word, and draws men into numberless sins. Its insnaring influence is the more dangerous, because foresight, industry, frugality, and cheerfulness, to a certain extent, are necessary and laudable; and hence it is extremely difficult for men to be convinced that their attachment to it is too great, or inconsistent with their duty and safety. Take heed, therefore, lest your heart be overcharged with earthly thoughts and affections. Remember that "no man can serve two masters; for if any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." Frequently anticipate the solemn hour, when death will put an end to your activity, frustrate your plans, and compel you to leave your wealth to others. Never forget that "*one thing is needful.* Seek first the kingdom of God, and the righteousness thereof, and all other things shall be added unto you." Resolutely forsake this world for Christ, that you may for ever enjoy all things in him; lay up your treasure in heaven, that your heart may be there also. Hitherto you have been thoughtful about competent provision for this life, which is only a vapour that shall soon pass away: shew yourself truly wise, by a corresponding degree of solicitude about your eternal interest. You understand the value and utility of such bonds and securities as man can give for temporal property: should you not accept that divine security for spiritual and eternal blessings, which is laid before you in the new covenant, and take hold of it as your heritage for ever? Divest yourself of inordinate care about earthly things, by daily presenting your requests unto God; and get his

peace to dwell in your heart. Keep in view the doctrine of the cross, that you may become dead to the world; and "when Christ who is our life shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory."

3. *To the aged.* The best portion of your life is gone, never to return. God has bestowed many temporal benefits upon you, and allowed you many favourable opportunities for serving him in your generation. The hour is now at hand in which you must render a strict account of the use that you have made of advantages long enjoyed, and of all that you have done in the body. Those who grow old under the sound of the gospel, without cordially embracing it, and living under its influence, are in a state peculiarly awful and hopeless. Consider how little the world can do for you now, when you are just about to leave it for ever, and how you can answer before your impartial Judge! If you die in impenitence and unbelief, after a long life of estrangement from God, your future punishment will be far more dreadful, than if you had been cast into hell when young in years, and less guilty. Awake, therefore, from your dangerous lethargy; for except you repent, without delay, you must speedily be destroyed without remedy. God might have already banished you from his presence, to bewail your protracted obstinacy in the region of hopeless torment; but he still waits to be gracious, and continues to expostulate with you for your everlasting benefit. "As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die?" Receive his word into your heart, while he speaks in mercy: "Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, and call upon him while he is near." Ezek. xxxiii. 11. Isa. lv. 6—9.

4. *To the poor and afflicted.* You have no earthly portion or prospect worthy of attention. Most of the comforts of time are above your reach, and you are liable to the additional mortification of being

neglected and forgotten by those who are in more agreeable circumstances. Take heed of murmuring against God, or slighting his word, lest you lose the heavenly felicity also, and be miserable in both worlds. Remember that the Son of God, who was rich, became poor, and patiently endured contempt and sorrow, that the destitute and wretched might be advanced to inherit all things together with him in a better world. The new covenant which he dedicated with his blood, is wisely adapted to your low and necessitous state: by the appointment of the Most High it is proclaimed to the poor, and you have immediate access to all its privileges without price. Your present afflictions were mercifully sent, to wean your affections from terrestrial objects, and prepare you for relishing heavenly blessings. Be persuaded, therefore, to hear and embrace the divine call, that you may become rich by faith, and meet for entering the final inheritance of the saints. Thus will your bitter cup of adversity be sweetened with spiritual consolation; your present troubles will be overruled for the advancement of your future glory, and your everlasting joy will be rendered more exquisite by the experience of temporary hardships.

5. *To those who have hitherto made no pretensions to serious godliness.* The badness of your state is manifest, for you sins "are open, going before to judgment." You have lived without God, and practised daily rebellion against him. Having hardened your hearts, in opposition to the voice of gospel truth and the remonstrances of conscience, you are without excuse, and there is but a step between you and irrecoverable ruin. Take heed of wearying the divine patience, which is intended to lead you to repentance. God is now inviting you, as lost sinners, to accept his pardoning mercy; and entreating you, as impotent enemies, to be reconciled to him through the death of his Son. The holy angels that surround his throne, wait with deep interest to observe the issue: your conversion will heighten their joy, and secure your future admission to share their ex-

alted pleasures. Let not the deceitful adversary any longer prevail in your heart. Notwithstanding all your offences, God still looks down with compassion, ready to receive you into favour. Jesus, the Friend of sinners, lives in heaven to make effectual intercession in your behalf, and introduce you with acceptance before the throne. Consider the parable of the penitent prodigal: adopt his resolution, and return to your heavenly Father, that you may receive the tokens of his forgiving love, and enjoy all the privileges of his family. Luke xv.

6. *To barren, stationary, and comfortless professors of religion.* Hitherto you have halted between Christ and the world. The remonstrances of conscience have been too frequent and cutting to admit of your enjoying its sordid pleasures; yet your natural attachment to them has been so strong as to keep you from forsaking all things for Christ. You have lost the carnal ease and sinful pleasures of the ignorant and profane, without attaining the more solid joys of them that believe to salvation. You have had much painful experience of conviction, serious resolution, and mournful instability; you have frequently been perplexed and agitated with doubts and fears; but you never as yet attained either the peace or the love of Jesus Christ. All your religious performances have been a fruitless drudgery, equally burdensome to you, and offensive to God. It is therefore high time to conclude, that you have in times past been nothing better than the foolish virgins, whited sepulchres, or barren branches liable to be cut down and cast into the fire. If you continue in this wretched state, all your attempts to serve Christ will be lost, your hypocrisy will at last be exposed, and your condemnation pronounced before the universe. How will you be covered with shame, when severed from among the righteous, and placed on the left hand of the Judge among those whom you now stigmatize as sinners! And how will you be able to endure the company and the scorn of those wicked persons, who presently hate you for the semblance of godliness! What if they

should turn your religious professions and hypocritical performances into derision, and shew their contempt, by treating you as too vile to be companions, even in the place of torment, for honest sinners who never mocked God nor deceived men with false pretensions! Be persuaded to relinquish all your worthless duties and attainments at once, that you may win Christ and be clothed with his righteousness. Begin the life of religion in a new and better way than heretofore, by accepting his faithful word, after the example of Saul of Tarsus, and embracing all the promises of the new covenant, as yea and amen in him. Thus shall you become what you have hitherto only seemed to be: God will rejoice over you to do you good; his service will be your delight, and all the glories of heaven will be your own.

7. *To those who have already tasted that the Lord is gracious.* Do not turn away from this subject, as if it were adapted for sinners alone, but in no degree suitable to you: for, admitting the sincerity of your past attainments, they are not meet to be rested in. Much corruption still remains in your hearts to be purged away; and all that you have hitherto received, is little indeed, compared with what you need to render you perfect. See to it that you do not become rich in your own eyes; but, forgetting the things that are behind, make it your daily care to apprehend more fully that for which you are apprehended of Christ. Frequently renew your covenant with God, by taking hold of his promises, imploring their seasonable accomplishment, and dedicating your all to him: thus your faith will be gradually established, you will attain the full assurance of hope, and become meet for entering the heavenly Jerusalem.

PART NINTH.

DIRECTIONS FOR ENTERING INTO COVENANT WITH GOD.

JEREMIAH l. 5. *Let us join ourselves to the Lord in a perpetual covenant.*

THE gospel of Christ exhibits a sure foundation for the immediate confidence of the guilty to whom it is addressed; and when it was published by the apostles, multitudes were convinced of their sins, awakened from a state of carnal security, deeply humbled before God for their unworthiness, instructed in the way salvation, and filled, without delay, with joy and peace in believing. We read of none in the apostolic writings, who admitted the general truth of the gospel, and sought the benefit of it in a serious manner, that remained for any considerable space of time in a state of comfortless uncertainty respecting their acceptance. A great difference in the religious experience of awakened inquirers, is obvious in modern times. Many of them remain long in the most distressing suspense about their spiritual and eternal interest, before they derive any solid comfort from the word of Christ, which they hear and pretend to believe. Such persons sometimes appear zealous for evangelical doctrines, and manifest an ardent desire to be found in Christ; they offer up many fervent prayers for pardoning mercy, and observe a strict form of godliness; without attaining any thing like that divine consolation which the primitive converts enjoyed from the hour in which they first believed the message of peace. Some of them strive with ardour and perseverance to enter the strait gate: but, after seeking salvation for years, they cannot

tell whether they have found it. Frequently they suspect that all their labours have been bestowed in vain, and that their prayers and other servile performances, are offensive to God. In proportion as they feel the magnitude of their interest in the unseen world of endless retribution, their minds are agitated with slavish fear; and the pain arising from protracted suspense, induces some to adopt the desperate expedient of resolutely concluding, that their experience of trouble about sin, is the proper effect and the evidence of regenerating grace. They lay aside their anxiety as no more necessary, and congratulate themselves on account of their past terrors, as the salutary pangs of a new birth. Self-deceivers of this kind have sometimes boasted on account of their deep convictions, awful terrors, and painful conflicts, as if their title to spiritual comfort had thereby been increased; while they have manifested no small degree of jealousy respecting the conversion of others who have derived immediate peace from the reception of divine truth without walking in darkness, by insinuating that their comfort had cost them very little, and that it had been too easily attained.

The difficulties that many serious persons experience in seeking rest to their souls, and the numerous snares to which they are exposed, render it necessary, not only to persuade them to relinquish every self-righteous dependance, and take hold of the new covenant; but also to lay before them the plainest directions how they should join themselves to the Lord, and shew them how to avoid such stumbling-blocks as are calculated to obstruct their spiritual progress, and involve them in discouraging perplexity.

As the motives which were formerly advanced, may be sufficient, if properly contemplated and laid to heart, for the purpose of exciting some who have hitherto lived without God, to seek an interest in his promises; I shall now address myself, as was formerly proposed, to those serious enquirers who acknowledge the excellence of the new covenant,

and desire to enjoy its privileges in the only way which he has appointed. Such persons are fully aware, that faith in Jesus Christ is required, as the only effectual means of genuine and abiding comfort; but having as yet derived no perceptible benefit from this general information, they wish to be furnished with more particular directions how they should apply their minds to this most necessary and important subject. Being convinced that their past religious experience has been only a maze of perplexity, altogether different from that of the primitive disciples of Jesus, they are willing to give up the whole, as worse than doubtful, and anxious to know how they ought to begin the christian course in a new and scriptural manner, by joining themselves to the Lord according to his new covenant, so as thereby to obtain a sure interest in its promises, and the seasonable accomplishment of them.

The following plain directions are submitted to those who seriously "ask the way to Zion."

1. Join yourself to the Lord by *hearing his voice in faith.* As faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God, he calls sinners to join themselves to him, by saying, "Incline your ear, and come unto me: *hear*, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you." The divine promises become profitable only in proportion as those to whom they are addressed, mix faith with them in hearing. The unbelief of the Israelites excluded them from the land of promise; hence those who are favoured with the gospel, are exhorted to labour to enter into that rest which it reveals, by mixing or attempering it with faith. Rom. x. 17. Isa. lv. 3. Heb. iv. 1, 2, 11.

Now, in order to hear the gospel with faith, you must *give earnest attention to it*, that you may properly understand the meaning of its important facts, declarations, invitations, and promises. While the Lord speaks, you ought to banish all obtrusive thoughts, to fix your mind on what he says, and deliberately ponder and compare the various terms

which are used, till you apprehend the true import of them.

Candidly *weigh the evidence* of all that is set before you, that genuine assent may be thereby produced. You are not required to believe any thing without competent evidence, suitable to the nature of the truths which are asserted; but, that the end may be attained, you must exercise your judgment in collecting and examining the various branches of it. Give diligence to become familiar with the various external and internal proofs of the divine inspiration and integrity of the holy Scriptures. Contemplate the numerous miracles by which the sacred message was originally attested by Jesus Christ, and prophets, and apostles. Mark the successive accomplishment of their predictions respecting the state of the people of God and the kingdoms of this world. Consider also the peculiar purity and harmony, majesty and sublimity, beneficial tendency, and lasting efficacy of what God has revealed; and the striking analogy between his word and his visible works in heaven and earth, which shew his being and power, wisdom and goodness. Having obtained satisfaction respecting the inspiration of the Scriptures, imitate the example of the noble inhabitants of Berea, by searching them daily, to ascertain their proper meaning, and the truth of those sentiments which are professedly grounded on them. Learn to consult them with judgment and discretion, by selecting those proofs which are appropriate, admitting their obvious import, and rejecting the sophistry of those who attempt to wrest them. Acts xvii. 11, 12.

Impartially examine how far the charges advanced against sinners in the word, correspond with your own character, and in what degree you are liable to condemnation for wilful rebellion and enmity against God. Persist in this inquiry till you perceive your righteousness to be as worthless, your heart as depraved, your danger as great, and your state as helpless, as the Scriptures have affirmed; for "they that be whole need not a physician, but they that

are sick; and Christ came not to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance." Consider especially the greatness of your sin in neglecting to believe in him, and frustrating his grace by repeated attempts to derive spiritual comfort from your own hypocritical performances. Rom. iii. 9—20.; viii. 5—8.; ix. 30—33. John xvi. 8—11.

Contemplate the suitableness of Christ and the blessings of the new covenant to your own condition, as guilty and depraved, justly condemned, and liable to all the unknown horrors of everlasting death. Fairly contrast their excellence and durability with the emptiness and insufficiency of those perishing vanities which naturally attract your confidence and affection. Deliberately count the cost of becoming a disciple of Jesus, and continue to compare those precious benefits which may be enjoyed in him, with all other objects that solicit your attention in competition with him, till you feel sincerely willing to count all things loss for his sake, and to forsake all your earthly possessions, your carnal companions, corrupting pleasures, and imaginary righteousness, to win him and be found in him. Luke xiv. 25—33. Phil. iii. 4—11.

Consider the declarations, invitations, and promises of the gospel as *immediately addressed to you*, as much as to any other sinners of the human race, by the great God himself, who is presently speaking to you from heaven by his Son, and entreating you to accept his great salvation, and be for ever reconciled to him. He demands your attention now, as he formerly did that of the Israelites, when he proclaimed the old covenant to them from mount Sinai; and he looks down from his celestial throne, to observe how you treat his message, and deal with you according to your faith. Apply his words, therefore, with becoming reverence, and take heed of slighting his gracious call, or questioning his sincerity; for his eyes are upon your heart. He is ready to fulfil his word, if you judge him faithful; but if you continue unpersuadable, he will hold you guilty

of treating him as a liar, and deal with you accordingly. 2 Cor. v. 18—21. Heb. xii. 25, 26.

If any doubt or feeling of reluctance arise in your mind, *resist it resolutely without delay, by the sword of the Spirit*, which is the word of God. In order to this, give diligence to be well acquainted with the sacred oracles, carefully treasure up the principal grounds of faith; "let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom:" recal it to memory in time of need, and skilfully make use of it after his successful example, saying, "thus it is written—this is the record of God who cannot lie, —and thus he calls men to believe, by his supreme authority." Matt. iv. 3—10. 1 John v. 9—11.

In short, you must glorify God, by *giving full credit to his word of peace*, as constantly true in itself, and *presently sure to you*, notwithstanding all your unworthiness; because he is almighty, and therefore able to fulfil it; he is gracious, and therefore willing to fulfil it; he has pledged his faithfulness, consequently his honour is engaged, that none who believe him shall ever be confounded. If the purity of his holiness, or the inflexibility of his righteous indignation against sin, awaken the fear of deserved wrath, think again of the perfect mediation of his beloved Son, the value of his atoning blood, the efficacy of his intercession, his ability to save to the uttermost, his pressing calls which are addressed to the wretched, and the kind assurance which he has given, that he will in no wise cast out any who come to him for salvation. Keep in view the encouraging manner in which he treated sinners in the days of his flesh: revolve in your mind what he said to comfort them, and remember that his heart is still the same. His compassion is boundless, his love passeth knowledge, he is still willing to be employed as the Saviour of them who are ready to perish; and what he formerly said to others, he now speaks to you by his Holy Spirit. You must believe these things, or be condemned for your obstinacy: therefore imitate the example of Abraham, by taking God at his word, resting on it with undoubt-

ing confidence, and holding fast the immoveable foundation of hope, notwithstanding all apparent or possible difficulties. Rom. iv. 16—25.

2. Join yourself to the Lord, by *calling upon him in faith.* Prayer is the natural effect of genuine faith, the most proper expression of it, and one of the means best adapted for promoting its increase. Hence it is frequently and abundantly encouraged, even at the very beginning of true conversion to God. He directs the poor to buy of him in this manner, without money, saying, "Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near. I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; for whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." Isa. lv. 1, 6. Rev. iii. 17, 18. Rom. x. 12, 13.

To comply with this direction, you must *lay aside all the ignorant, formal, lifeless prayers* which you have been taught to repeat in a customary manner, without understanding and becoming reflection. God is a Spirit: he demands spiritual worship, and those who honour him with their mouth, while their heart is far from him, deceive themselves and provoke his greater displeasure. It is indispensible to the divine acceptance of prayer, that it proceed from the mind, as *the result of present knowledge* and conviction; for thoughtless addresses are utterly unfit to be presented to the Searcher of hearts, who desires truth in the inward man. While Saul of Tarsus remained a blind Pharisee, God made no account of the petitions which he often repeated before him: but when he laid aside his self confidence, and began to call upon the Lord in a new manner, his supplications reached the celestial throne, and obtained the approbation of the Saviour, who encouraged Ananias to treat him as a brother, saying, "Behold, he prayeth!" Acts ix. 11.

Fix your attention on the immediate presence and glorious perfections of God, when you to pray to him. Banish all other objects from your mind, and believe that he continually supports and surrounds you. His glory is above the heavens, yet he is nigh

at hand; he sees in secret, and he is near to all that call on him. No outward image or representation of him is necessary to the intelligent worshipper, "for in him we live, and move, and have our being." He listens to the softest whisper, and observes all the thoughts of the heart. Those who utter their petitions hastily, without fixing their minds first on what he is in himself, and realizing his presence, are guilty of profaning his sacred name, and deceiving themselves. Becoming apprehensions of his majesty and grace, promote reverence and godly fear, and at the same time encourage humble confidence in his power. Jesus taught his disciples to lift up their hearts to God as their heavenly Father; and the prayers that are recorded in Scripture, generally begin with the solemn adoration of his greatness.

Make the word of the Lord the rule and the foundation of all your prayers. Petitions offered up according to the vain imagination and carnal lusts of men, are profane and unavailing. "This is the confidence which we have in him, that if we ask any thing *according to his will*, he heareth us." The will of God cannot be ascertained, except by his own revelation of it. As he speaks expressly to us by his word, our addresses ought to be the enlightened, deliberate, believing reply of our heart. Consider first what he speaks to you, and then honour him with a suitable return. Turn his just reproofs into the free and penitent confession of sin. Turn his awful threats into lowly expressions of self-abasement, by lamenting the procuring cause of his displeasure, and acknowledging the equity of his sentence. Turn his gracious declarations and holy precepts into fervent petitions for all spiritual blessings, and grace to keep his commands. Turn his invitations and promises into so many arguments, by importunately pleading on the ground of them for a seasonable answer. To pray in this manner is a reasonable service; and those who abound in it, enjoy direct and delightful intercourse with the Father of Spirits. 1 John v. 14. Jer. iii. 22, 23.

Adopt and imitate the forms and examples of prayer with which God has kindly furnished you. Whatever your condition be, you may find prayers exactly adapted to it, especially in the book of Psalms. The Lord calls you to come and reason with him, and he has condescended to suggest the most suitable petitions, and the most powerful pleas. Take with you his own words, therefore; turn unto the Lord, and say, "Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously: for in thee the fatherless findeth mercy." Draw near in the lowly attitude, and use the comprehensive petition of the despised publican, who, "standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me, a sinner." Learn to pray in faith from the parable of the prodigal, who arose, and came to his father, and said unto him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son." Hosea xiv. 2, 3. Luke xviii. 15.; xv. 17—21.

You may *occasionally address your prayers to Jesus Christ;* for his nature is divine, the apostles taught those who believed, to call upon his name. His saving offices afford peculiar encouragement to the guilty, and his redeeming love is calculated to beget confidence in the timid mind. Draw near to him therefore, like the penitent woman who "stood at his feet behind him weeping, and washed his feet with tears, and did wipe them with the hairs of her head, and kissed his feet, and anointed them with ointment." Earnestly implore his compassionate remembrance in his kingdom, like the dying malefactor, who applied to him for salvation, when he was on the cross. Plead with him on the ground of what he has said, like the woman of Canaan, whom he first tried with an apparent repulse, and afterwards honoured, by granting all that she desired. 1 Cor. i. 2. Luke vii. 36—50.; xxiii. 39—43. Matt. xv. 21—28.

Address your prayers most *commonly to the Father, through the mediation of his Son, by the aid of the Holy Ghost.* God the Father is uniformly repre-

sented as the original Author of salvation, and the ultimate object of christian faith and worship. Jesus consecrated a new and honourable way of access to his presence, and taught his disciples to ask every necessary blessing in his name. He promised also to send down the Holy Ghost, to abide with them for ever, and help their infirmities, as the Spirit of illumination, adoption, and supplication. Take heed therefore, of departing from the simplicity of Scripture, and following a vain imagination, by presenting any *direct addresses* to the Holy Ghost: but trust in his effectual influence, that you may thereby be emboldened to approach the celestial throne, and present your supplication to God, as your Father, with confidence in the atoning blood, and continual intercession of his exalted Son. "Through him we have access by one Spirit unto the Father, who raised him up from the dead, and gave him glory, that our faith and hope might be in God. Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you." Compare 1 Peter i. 2, 3, 21. Eph. ii. 18.; iii. 12, 14. Rom. viii. 15, 26. John xvi. 23, 24.; xiv. 13—17. Heb. x. 19—22.

Be as *exact and explicit in covenanting with* God, as your necessity and the vast importance of the subject require. Sincerely renounce all dependance on your own polluted righteousness, and all future subjection to those lusts, and other lords that have usurped dominion over you. Declare your cordial reception of Christ in all his offices, of his Holy Spirit to dwell in you as your Comforter, and of all the promises of the new covenant as your inheritance. Solemnly avouch the Lord to be your God, your heavenly Father, and your everlasting portion; and dedicate yourself to him through Christ, as a living sacrifice, to be his only, wholly, and for ever. Express your entire satisfaction with the complete plan of salvation, the blessings which God has promised, and the obedience which he has enjoined; together with your firm resolution of cleaving to him with all your heart, submitting to his will, and liv-

ing to his glory. Isa. xliv. 5. Zech. xiii. 9. Rom. vi. 17—23.

Many serious persons have written what they called a personal covenant with God, and subscribed it with great solemnity. We have already seen that it is the exclusive prerogative of Jehovah to make a covenant between himself and his creatures; therefore all attempts *to make any other separate covenant with him*, must be condemned as will-worship. The new covenant which he has established, is perfect and unalterable, freely exhibited in the gospel for the benefit of the guilty, and they are not called to make another of their own devising, but to hear the proclamation of his covenant, and take hold of it for themselves by the prayer of faith. Yet, in as far as the writing of such a prayer is calculated to fix the mind, to promote suitable reflections, render the penitent explicit in his addresses, and serve as a lasting memorial, that he is no longer his own, but the Lord's; it ought not to be censured or despised: only it must not be viewed as any separate covenant in itself, but merely a comprehensive prayer, or form of self-dedication to God, in which the sincerity of the heart is to be chiefly regarded; and the writing and subscribing are to be considered as only circumstances.

But whether you choose to commit any of your prayers to writing or not, *make sure of presenting them in faith.* Keep in view the proper object and the grounds of faith, and never presume to utter any thing before God, that you do not firmly believe in your heart; for "all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do." Humbly acknowledge and lament your remaining unbelief; cry to the Lord to remove it, and increase your faith by the influence of his grace. Persevere in this manner, by wrestling against all your occasional doubts and fears, till your confidence become strong, and grow up to a full assurance. Mark ix. 23, 24. Luke xvii. 5.

3. Join yourself to the Lord, by *confessing him in faith.* This is expressly enjoined, and represented

as necessary and highly advantageous to all that believe. Our Lord said, "Whoever shall confess me before men, him shall the Son of man also confess before the angels of God. But he that denieth me before men, shall be denied before the angels of God." His great apostle said, "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart, that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." The primitive christians made profession of their faith at the time of their conversion, as we learn from many examples in the apostolic history; and those who pretended to believe in Christ without confessing him, were censured as mere hypocrites, who loved the praise of men, more than the praise of God. Luke xii. 8, 9. Rom. x. 9, 10. John xii. 42, 43.

Now, if you have embraced the new covenant, by believing in Christ with the heart; the passages referred to, shew what is your indispensable duty. You are called to confess Christ *immediately*, without hesitating, consulting your carnal wisdom, or delaying till some more convenient season; for the duties of believing and confessing, are inseparably connected by the precepts and approved examples of the New Testament. From the time when the apostles began to call sinners into his kingdom, with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven to direct and assist them, there is no instance of any true converts who remained any considerable time without making a regular profession of what they believed, nor is the slightest countenance given to the opposite practice of suppressing conviction on the ground of sloth, shame, fear, love to this world, or any other unworthy principle. Make profession of Christ *openly and boldly*, before his enemies as well as his friends, without shrinking or dissembling in order to avoid personal trouble, expence, the scorn of the wicked, or any degree of persecution to which you may be exposed for his sake. Confess Christ *plainly and fully*, according

to the measure of your faith, by freely declaring your views of his excellence, your entire confidence in him for salvation, your ardent love to his name, your cheerful subjection to his authority as the King of Zion, and your firm determination to keep his commands. Profess your faith *jointly* according to the apostolic rule, by coming out from the world, turning away from those who deny the power of godliness, and uniting with the disciples of Jesus as a visible body, for the purpose of observing all his institutions. Make profession of religion *honestly and sincerely*, according to what you have actually discovered and believed of divine truth. Beware of implicitly adopting any human system of doctrine, or becoming bound to hold all your present views to the end of life. This would greatly pollute your conscience, restrain future inquiry, foster an obstinate bigotry, and perpetuate an attachment to error. The acquisition of knowledge requires time and diligence; no young disciple can be prepared to assent to any complete system with understanding; and to profess sentiments that have not been fully examined, is a solemn mockery of God and man. Rather make the sure word of truth your only standard, search out its meaning with unwearied diligence, and enlarge your profession as you advance in knowledge.

The apostles collected all those who received their divine message, into particular churches, and taught them to join together in observing the ordinances of Christ; but they recognised none as disciples, except those who united for his service; nor did they make any account of the pretensions of persons who privately admitted the truth of the gospel, and proposed to seek the Lord in secret, without openly espousing his cause, or attaching themselves to his people. Those who believed, were instructed concerning all the religious and social duties of their new state as church-members, and exhorted to edify each other in love; but those who continued without the pale of the visible church, were viewed as sinners, and called to repent and

believe the gospel; nor were any addressed as true saints in consequence of apparent personal seriousness, or represented as in the way to heaven, while they remained alone, and stood aloof from the flock of God. If the regular profession of Christianity had been only an optional service left to the discretion of men, it cannot be supposed that the apostles would have entirely overlooked solitary individuals of devout practice, so as never to honour them with a single exhortation or design to take the slightest notice of them in all their writings. We need not wonder, therefore, that those who attempt to work out their own salvation by the performance of private duties, without availing themselves of the advantages of church-fellowship, commonly continue in a dark, languid, comfortless frame. They palpably violate the commands of Christ, while they flatter themselves that they are employed in his service. By indulging their selfish feelings, and refusing to unite with the people of God, they set aside the fundamental laws of his kingdom, neglect the principal means of edification, hide their talent in the earth, grieve the Holy Ghost, and expose themselves to fatal delusion. How can the souls of such persons prosper by any possible diligence in the duties of the closet, when they persist in wilfully shutting themselves out from the enjoyment of the ordinances of social worship? or why should they think it strange, on reviewing their religious experience, to find that it has consisted of little more than fruitless conflicts and perplexing fears? A scriptural profession is eminently calculated to promote the increase of faith, and render its genuineness manifest, because those who unite in it do thereby take the yoke of Christ upon them, they honour him before the world, shew their attachment to his kingdom, and put themselves in the appointed way of spiritual edification. Many serious persons, after seeking rest to their souls by years of solitary devotion and mortification, without finding it, have relinquished all their blind performances as utterly worthless, and attained solid peace in be-

lieving, immediately on giving themselves to the Lord and to his people, according to the scriptures.

4. Join yourself to the Lord, by *receiving the tokens of his covenant in faith.* I allude here, I hope without giving just offence, to what was said of the ancient rite of circumcision, which was called the token or sign of God's covenant with Abraham, and the seal of the righteousness of faith. The peculiar rites of the new covenant are described in language of similar import, as we shall presently see, Gen. xvii. 7—14. Rom. iv. 11.

Baptism with water was divinely appointed for the purpose of solemnly initiating those who receive it, into the religion of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; by visibly representing their admission into the family of God, their mystical union with Christ, their purification from the guilt of sin by his blood, their regeneration by his Spirit, together with their communion with him, and conformity to him in his sufferings and death, burial and resurrection. Matt. xxviii. 19. Gal. iii. 26, 29. 1 Cor. xii. 13. Rom. vi. 3—8.

The administration of baptism is wisely adapted to fix the attention on the principal facts, doctrines, and privileges of the gospel, and to impress them upon the heart. The spiritual blessings of the new covenant, are represented as standing in immediate connexion with the outward sign by which they are sensibly exhibited as the gift of divine grace, and therefore the reception of it is evidently calculated to promote faith in the promises. Hence those who join themselves to the Lord, are called, in receiving the washing of water, to look with confidence to himself for the forgiveness of their sins, and all the other benefits of which it is his instituted pledge. To such persons it is said, "Repent, and be baptized every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost; for the promise is unto you, and to your children. And now, why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash

away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord." Acts ii. 38, 39; xxii. 16.

In the ordinance of the Lord's supper we have a striking representation of his body which was broken, and his blood which was shed, for our redemption. By the distribution of the emblems of bread and wine, the Saviour, with all his fulness, is solemnly exhibited as the immediate gift of the Father, for the life of guilty men. In eating and drinking, according to the divine appointment, the disciples apprehend Christ afresh, receive him into their hearts in a spiritual manner, devoutly commemorate his amazing love, shew forth his death to all parties therein concerned, and affectionately recognize one another as joint partakers of the same salvation. As the wine which is poured out, and used by them, denotes the precious blood with which he ratified the new covenant, the participation of it brings the promises to their remembrance, and thereby confirms their faith, encourages their prayers, fills their minds with consolation, and animates them for his future service. The primitive christians continued steadfastly in the breaking of bread, as one of the most important and beneficial parts of social worship, for which they statedly assembled on the first day of the week; and their rapid progress in faith, joy, and holy love, should excite all succeeding generations of believers to imitate their example. 1 Cor. xi. 17—34.; x. 15—17.

If you have not as yet joined yourself to the Lord, by the reception of baptism, that initiating ordinance demands your immediate attention. If you have already been baptized into Christ, you are now called to obey his dying command, as the appointed means of your spiritual nourishment, that you may grow up to the state of perfection. Be persuaded, therefore, to lay aside your carnal prejudices, and submit to the dictates of infinite wisdom without reserve. Examine your whole conduct, and especially the habitual state of your heart, by the sure test of Scripture; frequently approach the Lord's table in a penitent, believing frame; apply his saving benefits, and embrace all the promises

which he confirmed to you by his blood. Keep at a distance no longer, as a stranger or foreigner, but thankfully accept, and gratefully use, all the peculiar privileges of the children of God, that it may become manifest that you belong to his family.

As many find it difficult to comply with the plainest directions, and so continue long in darkness and perplexity respecting the state of their souls, notwithstanding much diligence in attending on what they term the outward means of grace; *I shall now attempt to point out and remove various stumbling-blocks*, which too frequently hinder awakened inquirers from effectually joining themselves to the Lord by faith, so as thereby to derive similar consolation from the new covenant, with the primitive christians.

1. Many serious persons do not attain the joy of faith, because *their hearts are divided between Christ and the world.* They wish to escape the condemnation of the ungodly, and obtain the celestial felicity of the righteous; but their affections are more ardently attached to earthly than to heavenly things. They love the present ease, the carnal pleasures, and the commendation of worldly men. They desire to share the peculiar privileges of the disciples of Christ, but without forsaking all that they have, to win him, or submitting themselves to follow him, bearing his cross.

If you feel your heart thus divided, remember that you cannot serve God and mammon. You cannot obtain possession of the pearl of great price, except you first sell all that you have, and buy it. He who loves any earthly relation or possession more than Christ, is not worthy of him. The serious young man, who refused to give up his temporal wealth for the Saviour, derived no benefit from him. Consider, therefore the personal dignity, and voluntary abasement, the manifold sufferings, and celestial glory of the Redeemer; that, by the virtue of his cross, and the attraction of his fulness, the world may become crucified to you, and you to the world. In proportion as you resolutely forsake all other objects, and cleave unto him alone, your mind

will be filled with joy and peace in believing. Carefully read and apply Matt. vi. 24—33.; x. 37.; xiii. 44—46.; xix. 16—22. 2 Cor. iv. 10—18.

2. Others remain destitute of the joy of faith, because *they attempt to derive spiritual comfort from their religious duties and devotional feelings, rather than from that foundation of hope which God has revealed to the guilty in his word.* The doctrine of salvation by grace is theoretically admitted by such persons, but not properly considered, and applied to their particular condition. Their attention is chiefly directed to the necessity of being born again of the Spirit, to the neglect of the saving truth by which that change is produced. Being persuaded that all true converts have a personal interest in Christ and the promises, and that those who still remain in their natural state are children of wrath, they anxiously review their spiritual experience, and search their hearts, in order, if possible, to discover some favourable symptom of inward renovation. When they think that they have attained any of the marks of sincere godliness, they flatter themselves with the hope of sharing the privileges of the godly; but when they feel nothing spiritually good in their hearts, and suspect the genuineness of their religious experience, they become dejected, so that the naked declarations of the gospel yield them no effectual relief.

Such persons need to be taught that self-examination is not their immediate duty, and that nothing could be more injurious to them, than the comfort which they seek to derive from the probable appearance of a former conversion to God, while their prevailing unbelief shuts out the cheering proclamation of mercy to the rebellious. The primitive christians obtained inward peace, by the simple reception of the joyful sound which they heard from the apostles, and not by the perception of any distinguishing excellence in themselves. All who, by the same means, have been delivered from their guilty fears, and attracted to the only refuge set before them, are called to examine the effects of their faith, and

prove their own works; but serious inquirers should seek their *first comfort*, not by looking within, to decide concerning their own variable frames, but by turning away from all their duties and feelings to Christ. Until awakened sinners learn to derive peace and joy from that sure foundation which God has set before them in his word, it will be at their peril, if they conclude that their state is safe, on the ground of any supposed good impressions or experience of their own. Those who cannot trust in Christ for salvation, without feeling that they are already in possession of something which places them beyond the hazard of being lost, do not really trust him at all, how orthodox soever their words be on the subject. Like the unbelieving Jews, they stumble at the word of faith, and seek righteousness, as it were, by the works of the law. Rom. xi. 30—33.

3. Some are held in spiritual bondage by *terrific apprehensions of the eternal and unalterable purposes of God.* By consulting the Scriptures, they learn, that true christians are all called out of darkness into a state of justification, in consequence of having been chosen by God, and predestinated to adoption, before the foundation of the world; and as his decrees are sovereign and unchangeable, they conclude, that if he have not already predestinated them to glory, their attention to the gospel must be unavailing, because salvation "is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy."

The divine counsels and purposes cannot hinder any man's conversion, but presumptuous speculations, and harsh conclusions, respecting them, are greatly calculated to do so, by turning away the mind from seasonable truth. No subject could be more unsuitable for awakened sinners, or more completely above their comprehension. They do not perplex themselves by fruitlessly questioning the secret designs of the Almighty respecting the things of this life, or doubting of ordinary success in the proper use of honest industry; and why should they hesitate about the efficacy of the appointed means of salvation? Instead of prying into the inscruta-

ble counsels of God, or vainly attempting to reconcile his certain foreknowledge and irrevocable decrees, with the liberty of the human will, and the responsibility of mankind, they ought to contemplate the clear manifestation of his love, in giving his only Son for their redemption, and to apply his merciful calls, which are addressed to them from heaven. The only way in which they can make their election sure, is by obeying the gospel. Those who refuse to comply with what God has actually revealed as their rule of duty, and murmur against him, as if the exercise of his sovereign authority were at variance with the claims of equity, do thereby confirm their unbelieving despondency, inflame the natural enmity of their heart, render themselves meet for destruction, and begin the business of hell before the time.

4. Many serious persons do not attain the comfort of the promises, because *they never attend to the important duty of directly believing in Christ.* They seek peace and joy by abounding in other duties—such as reading and hearing the word, praying and singing praises to God, striving against sin, and keeping their hearts. Their practice of closet devotion is regular; and their daily companions acknowledge the straitness of their religious zeal. Their own conscience bears witness to their painful conflicts, their numerous instances of self-denial, their mortification, and their arduous endeavours to raise the affections from earthly to heavenly things; but they cannot look back to the particular time or place when they made it their direct business to believe unto righteousness with all their heart, according to the gospel call. They have laboured long and hard to work out their own salvation—they frequently wonder that their efforts have been overlooked, and the consolations of the Holy Ghost withheld;—yet they have wholly neglected *the work of God,* with which their religion should have commenced. Having been accustomed from their youth to admit the truth of the Scriptures, in a general way, they imagine that they always believed,

though they cannot tell when, nor where, nor on what grounds. They have been convinced of many other sins, but not of their sin of unbelief—the greatest and most fatal of all.

Such persons ought to review their criminal negligence, and yield to the salutary, though painful, conviction, that, in all their past religious services, they have closed their eyes against the word of God, and treated it as if he had not been sincere in addressing them. His proclamation of pardon and salvation has long been sounded in their ears; yet they have never made it the object of their chief attention, or perceived its fitness to relieve their minds from the burden of conscious guilt. Instead of continuing to deceive their own hearts, by the fruitless repetition of polluted offerings, which he cannot accept, let them do justice to the gospel, and to themselves, by directly believing it in the view of eternity, as they never believed it before. Let them retire to their closet for this very purpose, and read the divine message of grace, and receive it in its native simplicity, as immediately addressed to themselves. If any refuse to comply with this friendly counsel, and continue walking in darkness, Christ will be righteous in rejecting them at last, because they *would not* come to him, when they might have obtained life.

5. Many continue at a distance from Christ, because *they consider it necessary first to acquire various preparatory qualifications, to fit them for coming to him, and enjoying his salvation.* To approach the spotless Redeemer as they are, without cleansing away their filthiness, and putting on the wedding garment, seems, in their estimation, nothing less than gross and dangerous presumption; therefore they deem it requisite to delay their application, till after they have attained a more perfect conviction of the demerit of sin, and the extent of their depravity—a greater degree of contrition, humiliation, and self-abhorrence for their abominations—a more ardent thirst for Christ and his righteousness—and even an absolute submission to the sovereign will

of God, in either granting or withholding his saving grace, according to his good pleasure. These preparatory qualifications are considered necessary to render sinners capable of relishing the blessings of the gospel, loving the Saviour above all other objects, and honouring him with grateful obedience.

Serious persons who have been discouraged by such scruples, ought to remember that God commands all the hearers of the gospel, to believe in his Son; and that there can be no presumption in complying with his express call. Nothing spiritually excellent can possibly be attained without that faith which is the great renewing principle. The wedding garment must be received from Christ himself; and those who put it on, by believing in him, do thereby become acceptable guests in the house of feasting. Many awakened persons, by keeping at a distance from him, in order to acquire better preparation, have felt their hearts become much worse; their condition appeared more hopeless, and they have been constrained, after all their painful efforts, to come to him at last, without being able to bring any thing along with them, except accumulated guilt and helpless wretchedness. Evangelical joy, love, and obedience, do not effectually result from the temporary compunction of the sinner before believing, but from the transforming nature of that truth which is believed, and the abiding influence of the Holy Spirit, by which the law of God is written in the heart, according to his promise.

6. Many involve themselves in fruitless distress, by *misrepresenting the nature of gospel faith, as if it denoted some difficult condition,* to be performed for the purpose of procuring a personal title to Christ and his benefits. Hearing that genuine faith is required of sinners as the appointed means of salvation, they deem it necessary to be *conscious of first possessing this distinguished grace,* before they embrace the consolatory declarations of the word, as sincerely and freely addressed to them. They also inadvertently confound faith with those holy dispositions which naturally result from it; and thus, viewing it as a compend

of all that is excellent in the new creature, they vainly strive to educe something spiritually good, from their hard and wicked hearts, before they adventure to believe that divine proclamation of mercy, by which alone a right state of mind can be produced. Being unsuccessful in their ill-directed efforts, they consider themselves destitute of that conditionary faith which they had rashly accounted it necessary to bring with them to the Saviour; and hence, they reject all his gracious calls, as above their reach.

Those who have entangled themselves with such misapprehensions, should learn to distinguish faith, which is merely a persuasion of the truth of what God says in his word, from that holy frame of mind which proceeds from it, as its proper effect. Faith purifies the heart, and works by love; it is therefore necessary to believe that proclamation which is the only sure ground of hope, before any consciousness of either faith, purity, or love can be attained. To bring any sort of conscious excellence to God, as the ground of personal confidence in his pardoning mercy, would completely invert that order which he has established. Those who are spiritually taught of him, first believe his love which is manifested in Christ, and then love him, because he freely loved them. The blessings of the gospel are all tendered to the guilty indiscriminately; and faith denotes the reception of them, as a gift sincerely proffered; not any price brought to procure the right of applying them. If you think that you could come to Christ with confidence were you already in the actual possession of such faith as you judge necessary to recommend you; be persuaded to come just now as you are, and he will in no wise cast you out. Fear not; only believe the saving truth, and its renewing influence on your heart will certainly follow.

7. Awakened sinners sometimes delay entering into covenant with God, on the ground of *their supposed inability to do so,* without the supernatural influence of the Holy Ghost. Knowing that faith is

the gift of God, and that no man can come to Christ without the inward drawing of the Father, they remain under the sound of the gospel, in a passive and indolent state, waiting for some sensible overpowering impulse, to change their hearts, and bring them to the Saviour, as the impotent folk waited for the moving of the water of Bethesda.

Such persons forget, that though faith be promised by God as a gift, it is also required of sinners as their indispensable duty. The apostles never represented the inability of men to believe, as any insurmountable impediment, or ground of excuse for spiritual sloth. They made no account of it, but commanded their hearers to receive the testimony of God, as they were accustomed, in other cases, to receive the testimony of credible men; and warned the obstinate, that their blood would be on their own head. The necessary aid of the Spirit may be depended on according to the divine promise; and wherever he produces a sincere desire to believe the gospel, he furnishes also the requisite ability so to do: but as his influence is commonly imperceptible; and as it is neither the rule of duty nor the proper ground of faith, sinners ought to embrace the gospel call as reasonable creatures, without attempting to distinguish between his operations, and the reflections of their own minds. The resolute reception of the truth is the best evidence of becoming regard for supernatural assistance; but those who complain of their natural impotence, when they are commanded to believe, and delay making application to Christ, under the pretence of waiting till they be irresistibly impelled so to do by divine power, thereby resist the Holy Ghost, and tempt God to leave them in their sins.

8. Many continue long in comfortless darkness, *by fixing their attention on the operations of their own minds about the gospel, instead of the proper object and ground of faith.* Having formed very complex apprehensions of saving faith, as consisting of various distinct acts of a mysterious nature, they are jealous

over themselves, lest they should believe in some wrong way; and therefore, while they exercise their minds, in attempting to put forth all the necessary acts in their proper order, their attention is incessantly turned towards their various thoughts, inclinations, and feelings, for the purpose of rightly directing every successive movement, and observing the correctness of the whole.

This elaborate process unavoidably bewilders those who engage in it; and their morbid excess of self-jealousy, naturally induces that fatal mischief which they are so anxious to avoid. The faith in question can never be attained by looking within, where darkness and disorder prevail, but only by looking without one's self to the glorious person, the finished work, the all-sufficient fulness, and free exhibition of Christ in the word. As the application of the seal to the softened wax, produces an impression exactly corresponding with the characters engraved upon it, the application of the living word to the mind, produces that faith which its contents require: neither is there any other way of attaining it. Those who set this word before their minds, and keep the proper object of faith in view, cannot fail in their manner of believing. The apostles never represented this as a complex mysterious operation. They stated the truth to the most unlearned and simple, and called them directly to believe it, without shewing any apprehension that some of their hearers might do so in an improper way.

9. Some reject that comfort which they might possess, by *supposing it necessary to rise all at once, from a state of total diffidence, to the full assurance of faith.* The word of salvation is frequently sweet to their taste, it encourages them to pour out their hearts to the Lord, and they feel refreshed in so doing: but as their former doubts and fears often present themselves, and they cannot entirely divest themselves of them, they foolishly relinquish what they have attained, by concluding that they are still totally destitute of living faith, that all their prayers are vain, and their sins unpardoned.

Such disconsolate persons ought to remember, that genuine faith, at its commencement, is commonly weak and wavering; that it is gradually increased by the continued application of the holy word which first produced it; and that, under the feeling of their own weakness, they should imitate the example of the afflicted parent, who came to Christ, and cried out with tears, "Lord, I believe: help thou mine unbelief." Instead of fainting in their minds, and casting away the beginning of their confidence, it is their duty to cherish it, by pondering the free invitations and promises of the gospel, renewing their importunate supplications, and resolutely cleaving to Christ against all opposition.

10. Finally, some young converts greatly hinder the increase and joy of their faith, by *their impatience to see the fruits of it.* They respect the divine promises, but soon become weary in looking for their accomplishment. Like the ancients, who required some visible sign for the confirmation of the prophetic word, they wish to have something in actual possession, as a source of abiding comfort. It is found difficult to live on things that are unseen, and entirely without themselves. They know that true faith naturally produces hope, and purity, and holy love; that it makes the thoughts, affections, and practice new; and that a dormant, powerless faith, which does not sanctify its possessor during this life, will not glorify him in the world to come. They read strongly coloured representations of the christian character, and attempt to reach the highest attainments of the saints; but their eagerness to be adorned with the abounding fruits of faith, gradually betrays them into the imperceptible neglect of the only source whence these fruits proceed. Thus their spiritual growth is retarded, the fruit which they impatiently desire is blasted, and their heavenly joy marred.

Such persons should mark the very slow progress of those disciples who were under the immediate care of Christ, and contemplate the mild and encourag-

ing manner in which he treated them. He did not quench the smoking flax, nor break the bruised reed: he kindly made the most of their poor attainments, and called them to abide in him, by holding fast his word in their hearts, as the only effectual way of bearing much fruit to the glory of his Father. The progress of their history shews how his word was fulfilled in their happy experience. They became eminent by degrees, and left an example of steadfastness to all succeeding generations. Let others, who are weak in faith, imitate them, by hiding the word of Christ richly in their hearts, trusting in him for all things on the ground of it, and living under its influence; thus shall they also bear good fruits with patience.

PART TENTH.

THE DUTY OF THOSE WHO HAVE OBTAINED AN INTEREST IN THE NEW COVENANT.

1 Thess. iv. 1, 2. *Furthermore, then, we beseech you, brethren, and exhort you by the Lord Jesus, that, as you have received of us, how you ought to walk, and to please God, so ye would abound more and more.*

The peculiar privileges, and the duties of the believer, are inseparably connected. None can obey the law of Christ without a personal interest in his salvation; and those who have been made partakers of his fulness, are both required and disposed to keep all his commandments. Those who object against the doctrine of free justification by faith alone, as in any degree subversive of the law of love, do thereby shew that they understand neither the

law nor the gospel, the old covenant nor the new. Personal obedience is not, indeed, demanded of sinners, for the purpose of recommending them to the divine mercy, or procuring their acceptance; but it is indispensably necessary on sundry other accounts.

The *immaculate purity of the nature of God*, requires holiness in all who are in a state of favour and communion with him. He cannot look upon evil, and he would be dishonoured by tolerating it in any of his children: neither could they enjoy any satisfactory intercourse with him, without being renewed in conformity to his character; for "how can two walk together except they be agreed?" In proportion as men are unholy in disposition, God is the object of their dread and aversion; and it is only in as far as they are renewed after his image, that they find delight in walking with him.

The *administration of impartial judgment* at the last day, renders holy obedience indispensable to all the heirs of glory; as the Judge of all will then shew his righteousness, by rendering to every man according to his works, without respect of persons. He will neither acquit nor condemn any, without assigning such competent reasons, as shall silence the impenitent, and fill them with shame; while the faithful shall be openly commended for their distinguishing worth. Those who patiently continue in well-doing, shall inherit honour and immortality, and evil-doers shall be visited with the due recompence of abasement and wrath.

The *peculiar excellence of the everlasting felicity to which believers are destined*, requires preparation corresponding with its superior nature. Their abiding inheritance is undefiled, and nothing unclean can be permitted to enter it. "Blessed are they that *do his commandments*, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city." All the wicked shall be for ever excluded from the general assembly of the righteous: they do not love their persons, nor savour their most exalted pleasures, neither are they qualified for joining them in the service of God, which will be their

continual employment. None shall be admitted to enter the heavenly temple, except persons previously consecrated to God as a holy priesthood, and trained to minister before him in purity.

The holy renovation of all the people of God, is effectually secured, by the *unalterable purpose of his predestinating love* towards them, before the foundation of the world, (Eph. i. 3—5.); the *death of his Son*, who gave himself for them, that he might redeem them from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works, (Titus ii. 11—14.); the *new covenant established with them*, in which he has promised to take away their stony heart, and give them a heart of flesh, and write his laws therein, (Ezek. xi. 19, 20. Heb. viii. 10.); *their actual regeneration*, by which they are created unto good works, and furnished with an abiding principle of new obedience, (Eph. ii. 10. 1 John iii. 6—10.); the *purifying and transforming nature of that faith*, by which they are justified, and constituted the heirs of promise, (1 Tim. i. 5. Gal. v. 6.); the *enlightening and sanctifying influence of the Holy Spirit*, that dwells in them, and abides with them all for ever, (2 Cor. iii. 18. Gal. v. 22, 23.); and the *intimate fellowship that they have with Christ*, in his sufferings, death, and resurrection, which both disposes and enables them, to crucify their lusts, die unto sin, and live unto God in all holiness and righteousness, (Rom. vi. 1—14.)

Our Lord Jesus Christ, therefore, fully instructed the apostles in all his laws and ordinances, as the King of Zion, and gave them commission, in the high character of his accredited ambassadors, to publish his gospel among all nations, and teach the believers of it to observe all things that he had commanded them. We are abundantly informed, by their history and epistles, that they faithfully and uniformly delivered all the laws and ordinances of Christ, to those whom they collected out of the world, into his kingdom, by their ministry, and earnestly enforced the obedience of them, by a great variety of the most persuasive, encouraging, and

transforming principles and motives. Acts i. 2. Mat. xxviii. 19, 20. 1 Cor. xi. 2, 23.; iv. 16, 17.

Their efforts in behalf of Christianity in the city of Thessalonica, may be viewed as a fair specimen of the manner in which they laboured, in all other places where they obtained entrance. Having been driven from Philippi by persecution, they came to Thessalonica, where, in a synagogue of the Jews, they preached concerning the death and resurrection of Christ, and confirmed their doctrine, by reasoning out of the Old Testament. Their gospel was accompanied with the effectual influence of the Holy Ghost. Many received it with much assurance, and united in the profession of their faith. The apostle Paul and his brethren, delivered the commandments of Christ to the young converts without delay, illustrated their meaning by an edifying example, enforced them by the cheering promise of the second appearing of the Redeemer, and, in the most affectionate manner, exhorted and charged every one of them, as a father doth his children, to walk worthy of God, who had called them to his kingdom and glory. As the adversaries of the gospel speedily compelled its faithful ministers to depart from the infant church which they had gathered in Thessalonica; Timothy the evangelist was dispatched, at an early period, to make inquiry respecting the condition of its members, and comfort them concerning their faith. On receiving a favourable report of their stability, our Apostle wrote this epistle, to put them in remembrance of what they had formerly been taught, to impart additional instructions and consolations, and to persuade them to abound more and more in the service of God. Acts xvii. 1—15. 1 Thess. i. 5, 6.; ii. 1—14.; iii. 1—8.

Our text expresses the principal design of the whole epistle. It was not addressed to carnal men, living in a state of estrangement from God, nor to any promiscuous community whatever, but to a society of visible believers in Christ, who had been called out of the world by the gospel, and united together for his service, and their own mutual edifica-

tion, as a particular church furnished with suitable ministers. They had formerly been taught how to walk, or conduct themselves, so as to please God; but as their entrance on the christian course had been very recent, they were exhorted, and, with apostolic gentleness, entreated to abound yet more and more.

This affectionate exhortation is still addressed by the Holy Ghost to all the genuine people of God, who have obtained like precious faith with the early disciples in Thessalonica, and united themselves together as church-members, by a similar profession of their faith. Therefore, it naturally leads us to take a scriptural view of *the duty of those who have obtained a personal interest in the new covenant*, which was the last thing proposed in our general method.

But as this important subject is applicable to those alone who have been brought into covenant with God through his Son, permit me, before we enter upon it, to inquire, what use you have made of all that has already been advanced concerning the new covenant. Have you deliberately considered the true nature of it and its invaluable privileges, the honourable office of Christ in reference to it, and the appointed way by which sinners are brought near to God, by laying hold of its benefits? Have you brought all that you have heard, to the infallible test of Scripture, and formed an impartial judgment for yourself, irrespectively of every human opinion? In a word, can you honestly declare that you have actually embraced this covenant with unfeigned faith, and that the Spirit of promise has changed your heart, prepared you for hearing the laws of Christ with meekness, and disposed you, like the children of God, to please him by obeying them in all things without exception?

Those who have hitherto heard only in vain, are objects of pity and commiseration. They have much reason to be dissatisfied with themselves, to deplore their obstinacy, lay to heart the aggravated danger to which it has exposed them, and be deeply humbled for their conscious unfitness for hearing or

obeying the commands of Christ. Let such unhappy persons speedily bethink themselves, and accept his gracious call to repent and believe the gospel; that, being brought nigh to God by his blood, they may have an honourable place among his faithful subjects. Those who have already believed the proclamation of divine mercy, are happy indeed. Having been delivered out of the hands of their most formidable enemies, admitted into the household of God, and renewed after his image, they are prepared to serve him without slavish fear, in holiness and righteousness before him all the days of their life.

The subject which now claims our attention, is of large extent, comprehending all the several duties of the christian towards the Lord Jesus himself, his heavenly Father, the Holy Ghost that dwells in him, his brethren in Christ, his own soul for the advancement of his salvation, and also towards mankind at large considered as his neighbours, including strangers and even enemies, as well as near relatives and friends; together with the way in which he ought to acquit himself in all the various circumstances of his lot, whether of tranquillity or temptation, liberty or persecution, prosperity or adversity. As the narrow compass of a single discourse, will not admit the particular enumeration of so many duties, the following general view of the way how to please God, is submitted to the consideration of them whom he has brought into covenant with himself as his people.

1. That you may walk so as to please God, you are required to *seek the progressive knowledge of him.* This is the most exalted, and necessary, and useful knowledge with which the mind can be furnished. God has therefore promised in the new covenant to impart it to all his people, for the purpose of distinguishing them from the rest of mankind, attracting their affections towards himself, satisfying their hearts, and preparing them for his service. He imparts it to his children in a gradual manner, as their minds are opened to receive it; and they are bound

to seek after it with unwearied diligence, as the source of their highest felicity, the principle of all inward holiness, and the foundation of all acceptable obedience.

Take heed, therefore, of over-rating your present measure of divine knowledge, or becoming wise in your own conceit. That which you have attained, may seem great in your eyes, when compared with your former ignorance; but it is inconceivably small and imperfect, compared with what remains to be acquired. The possessor of a little knowledge is liable to be puffed up with self-conceit, blindfolded with prejudice, and shut up in perpetual ignorance; but those who have made greater progress in their researches concerning the Divine Being, perceive that they cannot find him out, and that their most enlarged apprehensions of his nature, fall infinitely short of his glory, which is above the very heavens. Those who flatter themselves with the imagined superiority of their intellectual attainments, have need to become fools in their own eyes, that they may be rendered truly wise.

Carefully and incessantly study the Holy Scriptures where God has revealed himself in the plainest manner. They are able to render the simple, wise unto salvation, to employ the researches of the most intelligent, and enrich them with new treasures which can never be exhausted. The more diligently that you study them, the more you will see in them, and the greater delight will you derive from their sacred contents. Therefore examine with new attention the account which they give of the adorable attributes and purposes, the operations and precepts, threatenings and promises of God; and form your deliberate estimate of his character, not from the uncertain speculations of men, but from what he has said of himself.

Contemplate the glory of JEHOVAH, as it is manifested in the person, and by the mediation of Christ. He is the only perfect image of the invisible God; and those who know him, know the Father also. His mediation shews that there are three

distinct intelligent subsistents in the unity of the Godhead, and affords the most striking display of the divine holiness and aversion to sin, sovereignty and equity, goodness and severity, mercy and grace, loving-kindness and faithfulness. Our great Apostle, after acquiring all the ancient learning of the Jewish Rabbins, discovering the deep mysteries which God had concealed from the foundation of the world, and visiting the third heaven where he heard unspeakable words not lawful to be uttered upon earth, deliberately preferred the doctrine of Christ and his cross, and determined to make it the grand theme both of his study and his ministry, as the wisdom of God and the power of God.

Earnestly implore the influence of the Spirit of promise, to direct your researches, open your understanding, shew you the glory of the Lord, and shed abroad his love in your heart. If you ask this teaching from your heavenly Father, he will approve your petition, and grant you a liberal answer, without upbraiding your former ignorance. Read, therefore, and daily adopt the comprehensive prayers of our Apostle in Eph. i. 17, 19.; iii. 14—19.

Attentively observe the visible works of God which surround you, that your views of his unlimited greatness may thereby be enlarged. The heavens declare his glory, the earth is full of his riches, in wisdom he made them all, and his works are great, sought out of them who have pleasure therein. The book of Job, and many of the Psalms, shew how much the ancient saints delighted in observing and contemplating the visible wonders of creating wisdom and power. The gospel furnishes a revelation of the divine nature and will, which is specially adapted to the condition of fallen men, for the purpose of calling them to repentance, and teaching them how to secure everlasting life; but it was never intended to supersede the study of nature, or teach them to despise that original manifestation of his infinite attributes, which adoring angels had celebrated with joy from the beginning. Natural knowledge is the foundation of evangelical

knowledge; and those who neglect the former, as if it were too low and insignificant to deserve their regard, and confine their attention to the mysteries of the gospel, thereby do themselves incalculable injury. By losing sight of the boundless majesty and greatness of the divine Being, they imperceptibly accustom themselves to approach him with unholy familiarity, equally calculated to deceive their own hearts, and provoke his displeasure. Many serious persons, by forgetting the unspeakable distance between them and the object of their worship, and taking their views of spiritual things chiefly from allegorical interpretations of the Song of Solomon, have departed widely from the simplicity of Scripture truth, and degraded experimental religion, as if it consisted in something like conjugal fondling between fellow-creatures. It is not enough to admit in a cursory, general way, that God is omnipresent and omniscient, infinite in wisdom and power, greatness and goodness. We must strive to attain high and becoming apprehensions of his attributes, by rising from the less to the greater; comparing the utmost skill and strength of man, with the matchless wisdom and power which he has displayed in the least of his works; and then comparing them with his greater works of various kinds in succession, till our conceptions be elevated to the highest pitch of which our limited minds are capable.—We should contemplate the minerals which he created, with all their admirable properties; the endless variety of plants which he causes the earth to produce, with all their diversified beauties; the numberless kinds of animals which he continues to bring into successive existence, and to sustain by his bounty, with the curious mechanism of their organs, and their wonderful instincts; the astonishing number, magnitude, and distance of the heavenly bodies, with the regularity of their motions; and, above all, the boundless capacity of the human mind, together with the means of intellectual improvement and pleasure with which the Creator has furnished it. Such studies prepare the christian for

receiving more correct and enlarged views of gospel truth, deriving more exquisite pleasure from the redeeming love and condescension of God, and honouring him with a more enlightened and acceptble devotion.

Those who regard the works of the Lord, are favoured with peculiar advantages and facilities for the contemplation of them in modern times. Those important discoveries which rewarded the expensive and protracted researches of inquisitive men during many ages, are now laid open to all by the press; and any person of ordinary capacity, may attain a very beneficial knowledge of them, at small expence, and with a moderate degree of application. Here I take the liberty of earnestly recommending *Dick's Christian Philosopher*, lately published, as an invaluable treasure of the most important information respecting the works of God in heaven and earth, and peculiarly calculated to enlarge the mind, to free it from the darkening influence of prejudice and fanaticism, impart to it a pure and improving pleasure, and promote enlightened and fervent piety.

2. *Walk constanly with your God by faith.* When the Lord entered into covenant with Abraham, he said, "Walk before me, and be thou perfect." The succeeding patriarchs followed his example, and the disciples of Jesus are called to walk in their steps. Gen. xvii. 1. Rom. iv. 12. 2 Cor. iv. 13—18.

Faith is indispensably necessary, and of the highest practical importance, to all the people of God, not only at the period of their conversion from sin, but throughout their pilgrimage. It is by faith that they live through his Son, and stand fast in his grace, advance in their spiritual course, and abound in good works, overcome the temptations of this world and the powers of darkness, endure tribulation without fainting, and lay hold on eternal life. It is by faith alone that they abide in Christ, and receive daily supplies of grace out of his fulness, and enter into the holiest through his mediation, and enjoy fellowship with their heavenly Father. Without faith, none of the sister graces can be obtained or kept

alive, no progress can be made in the pursuit of holiness, no benefit can be derived from the ordinances of religion, and no kind of acceptable obedience can be presented to God.

Let it be your unceasing care, therefore, to abide and to grow in faith, by keeping in view its proper object, pondering the sure grounds of it, and living under the influence of unseen and eternal things, as they are set before you in the sacred oracles of truth. Maintain an abiding persuasion of the majesty and dominion, wisdom and power, justice and mercy, long-suffering and faithfulness of God. Remember that he is *your own* reconciled God and Father through Christ: that he is continually present with you in every place, to ponder your goings, search your heart, hear your prayers, supply your need, and fulfil all his promises in due season. Carefully collect his promises, treasure them up in your mind as carnal men do their temporal securities, apply them to your peculiar circumstances, live upon them as your spiritual nourishment, accept all the heavenly consolation which they are calculated to yield, and look for their gradual accomplishment.

Live by the faith of the Son of God, and maintain incessant communion with him by the influence of the Holy Ghost. Keep in view his original dignity as the divine Creator of the universe, his condescension, incarnation, substitution, perfect obedience, manifold sufferings, atoning death, glorious resurrection, celestial exaltation, continual intercession, and dominion over all worlds. Look to him in all his saving offices, endearing relations, unsearchable riches, and unchangeable love.

Your faith must not be limited to only a few of the more obvious facts and doctrines of the sacred oracles, but gradually extended to all that is exhibited in them. It must be firmly established on the immoveable foundation, in opposition to all the assaults of the powers of darkness, sceptical thoughts, worldly passions, and vexing cares. It must sanctify, and support, and animate your mind: and bring all your thoughts, purposes, and affections

under the influence of unseen and eternal things, in the same manner as the minds of carnal men are influenced by temporal things. You must learn to walk with your God, as if you saw his glory surrounding you, and his celestial host worshipping before his throne with vailed faces, and his Son making intercession for you on his right hand. You must conduct yourself as if you beheld the great white throne of judgment, with all mankind assembled before it, and heard the tremendous voice of the righteous Judge exposing every secret, and fixing the everlasting state of every intelligent creature. You must stand in awe of sin, as if you beheld the lake of fire and brimstone, and the terrible agitation of impenitent sinners in a state of helpless torment. You must prepare for your heavenly inheritance, as if you saw all the beauties, and tasted all the fruits, of paradise, and heard the shouting of the blessed in the New Jerusalem. You must strive to estimate the comparative importance of things temporal and eternal, in the same manner that you will unquestionably do after you shall have existed thousands and millions of years in a state of retribution. If you abound in such faith, its holy influence on your heart will fit you for pleasing God by every other duty.

3. *Walk humbly with your God.* Nothing can be more contrary to sound reason, inconsistent with the christian character, or offensive to the Almighty, than pride; especially spiritual pharisaical pride. He sees the proud afar off, and sets himself in batarray against them, to bring them low: but he dwells with the lowly and contrite; he will revive their spirit with heavenly consolation, enrich them with his grace, and exalt them to lasting honour. Isa. lvii. 15.; lxvi. 2. 1 Peter v. 5, 6.

Humility adorned the most excellent saints of former ages. While the Lord seemed to glory in the signal uprightness of Job, that patriarch blushed in his presence, and said, "Behold, I am vile, what shall I answer thee? I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." Abraham was honoured

the cross of Christ, to be crucified with him by the in-
as the friend of God; yet he accounted himself too insignificant to make intercession with the Judge of all the earth. Jacob felt himself unworthy of the Lord's mercies, yet he obtained the honour of prevailing with him by the prayer of faith. The pious psalmist made a public acknowledgement of his sin, notwithstanding his dignity as the king of Israel. Isaiah and Daniel abounded in humility, and both were peculiarly honoured by God. The most enlightened and useful mere man that ever lived, esteemed himself the chief of sinners, and less than the least of all saints. The Prince of saints, who had existed in the form of God from everlasting, made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and washed the feet of his disciples, and humbled himself by submitting to the ignominious death of the cross; and thereby taught his redeemed to be lowly in heart. They were commanded to keep in remembrance their early wickedness, while estranged from God, to confess their faults, mourn for them after a godly sort, take the lowest place, esteem each other above themselves, and cheerfully perform the meanest office of kindness for their benefit. Eph. ii. 11, 12. James v. 16.; iv. 6—10. Matt. xx. 25—28. Phil. ii. 3—8.

Having the aid of such precepts, examples, and encouraging principles, let it be your daily care to be clothed with humility in the sight of God and men. Frequently reflect on your littleness and insignificance before that immense Being in whose sight all nations are as the dust of the balance, and vanity. Review the sins of your youth, the total depravity of your heart, and the opposition that you made to the truth, before your eyes were opened to receive it. Observe the law in your members, which wars against the law of your mind. Consider how little there is of real goodness in all your religious duties, and how much your best services are polluted with the natural filthiness of your heart. Compare your very limited attainments in holy obedience, with the extent of your obligations, your superior religious

advantages, and the eminent worth of many who formerly served God in less favourable circumstances. Frequently renew the free and minute confession of your sins, with unfeigned repentance, shame, and self-abhorrence, and shew your sincerity, by being lowly and unassuming in all your social deportment.

4. *Resolutely put away sin, and seek perfect conformity to the holy image of God.* This is frequently required, in the most urgent manner, of all his children, who are the heirs of his promises. In connexion with some of the most important of them, it is said, "Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God. As he who hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; because it is written, Be ye holy, for I am holy. Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father who is in heaven is perfect." 2 Cor. vii. 1. 1 Peter i. 13—16. Matt. v. 48.

Agreeably to these, and many similar precepts, you must be sincerely willing to know what God has prohibited, and to discover all your own faults, without attempting to defend or palliate any of them. For this purpose, come daily to the light of divine truth, and impartially search your heart and ways. Cry to the Lord to bring home his word to your conscience, and convince you of all the remaining evils that his pure eyes see in you. Take heed of mocking him, or deceiving your own heart, by making strong general acknowledgments of sin, without turning away from it. Abstain from all appearance of evil, by stedfastly resisting every temptation with the sword of the Spirit and the shield of faith. Do not flatter yourself, by supposing that your old man will die without an effort on your part, or without a considerable degree of pain. Keep under your body, and practise self-denial, by extirpating those old lusts that were formerly like your right hand or eye. Bring all your carnal lusts and affections to

fluence of his sufferings; and count yourself dead indeed unto sin, and alive unto God, through his death and resurrection. Contemplate the beauty of the divine holiness, as it was displayed by the amiable example of Christ, that you may be transformed according to his image. Imbibe his spirit, walk as he walked, forget the things which are behind, and aim at nothing less than perfection.

5. *Flee from all idolatry.* In proportion as the heart is attracted towards any idol, it is withdrawn from God: he is thereby dishonoured and provoked, and the soul is exposed to disappointment and shame, for "the idols he will utterly abolish." Hence it is said, "What agreement hath the temple of God with idols? Wherefore, my dearly beloved, flee from idolatry. Little children, keep yourselves from idols." 2 Cor. vi. 16. 1 Cor. x. 14—28. 1 John v. 21.

We have no present temptation to the practice of such open and gross idolatry, as the primitive christians were exhorted to avoid; but we are daily exposed to the same sin in a more refined and subtile form, which is scarcely less dangerous to the soul. Those who have abandoned their old sins, are liable, through the deceitfulness of their hearts, to be imperceptibly drawn into a kind of spiritual idolatry, by bestowing on some mere creature, such a degree of regard as is due to their God and Saviour alone. Christians are chargeable with this, when they allow their affections to be inordinately attached to the things of this world, or the men of it—their earthly relations, or even their approved teachers. 1 John ii. 15—17. Col. iii. 5. James iv. 4. Matt. x. 37. 1 Cor. i. 12, 13.; iii. 4, 21.

To avoid this species of idolatry, make it your daily care to be strictly temperate in the use of all those earthly gratifications which are lawful in their nature. Remember that they are empty in themselves, and liable to be abused, in consequence of your remaining depravity. Recognize the undeserved bounty of your God in all the good things of

time that you receive, and learn to enjoy his love in them; which will greatly increase their sweetness, and render them the occasion of much thanksgiving. Exercise a godly jealousy over your thoughts and affections, lest they be at any time drawn away from him, and polluted by inferior objects. Take heed of over-rating terrestrial objects, or expecting more from them than they are capable of yielding; for except they be accompanied with the divine blessing, they will be the occasion of little else than sin, disappointment, and sorrow. Therefore, if your circumstances be agreeable, and your prospects encouraging, keep in view the vanity of them all; remember that adversity may be at hand; prepare for cheerfully relinquishing every earthly comfort, and cleave steadfastly to God alone, as the strength of your heart, and your portion for ever. "The time is short. It remaineth, that both they that have wives, be as though they had none; and they that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not; and they that buy, as though they possessed not; and they that use this world, as not abusing it: for the fashion of this world passeth away."

6. *Love your God and Redeemer with supreme affection.* The first and great comprehensive command, is, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind." God is entitled to the superlative affection of all his people, on account of his matchless excellence, as a being of underived and unlimited perfection—of what he has done for them, in creating them out of nothing, preserving them by his unwearied care, sustaining them with his bounty, redeeming them from destruction, regenerating them to himself, and making a new covenant with them—of what he has graciously become to them, as their God and Father, and all-sufficient Portion—of the precious promises that he has given them, and the eternal felicity that he has taught them to expect from him. Jesus Christ is entitled to the ardent affection of his disciples, because he has the same divine nature and infinite perfections with the Father; he graciously

assumed their inferior nature, became a servant, and willingly endured the death of the cross for their redemption; he was raised for their justification, appointed to minister for ever in heaven as their High Priest; and exalted to reign on the right of God, as the King of Zion;—he is nearly related to them as their elder Brother and Friend, their Husband and living Head;—his boundless love towards them still continues; he is touched with the feeling of their infirmities, and unwearied in making intercession for them with his Father; and he has undertaken to prepare mansions for them in the heavenly temple, change their vile bodies, make them perfect in one, and receive them to inherit all things with himself for ever.

Frequently contemplate all these and similar grounds of love to your heavenly Father and incarnate Redeemer, till your heart be made to burn within you. Reflect on their wonderful condescension in desiring and valuing your love, notwithstanding your meanness and unworthiness. Believe in the sincerity of their love towards you, as it is manifested in the gospel, and pray for the influence of the Holy Ghost to shed it abroad in your heart, and and thereby sweetly constrain you to make a due return of corresponding affection, such as the highest esteem and veneration, holy desire and complacency, abounding gratitude and devotedness of heart.

7. *Solemnly present your all to God as a willing sacrifice.* As he redeemed his people to himself from the degrading servitude and awful punishment of sin, made over himself wholly to them as their covenant God and everlasting covenant portion, and constituted them a royal priesthood to minister to him in his temple; it is requisite that they come before him with suitable offerings. They are not required to bring any sacrifices for sin, for these are no longer necessary; but to dedicate themselves to him as a living thank-offering. "I beseech you, therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, accepta-

ble to God, which is your reasonable service," Rom. xii. 1.

Agreeably to this apostolic injunction, it will be your duty to ponder that unquestionable right which God has to you, on many important grounds, and the extent of your obligations to dedicate yourself wholly to his service. Draw near to him, therefore, with filial reverence, and cheerfully present your body, with all its members, to be henceforth employed as the instruments of righteousness—your soul, with all its intellectual and active powers, to receive his sanctifying grace, and know him and and honour him—your precious time, to be spent in fulfilling his will—your temporal substance, to be used according to his good pleasure—your talents, influence, and all that you have, to be devoted to the advancement of his kingdom. Frequently renew your acceptance of Christ, in all his offices and relations, and cordially surrender yourself to him to be entirely his, living and dying.

8. *Bring your offspring to God, and diligently train them to please him.* The Lord established an important religious connexion between his people and their children from the beginning, as the ground of many beneficial obligations. When he entered into a covenant with Abraham, he promised to be a God to him and to his seed after him in their generations; and appointed all their males to be separated for his service by the rite of circumcision, which was the token of his covenant with them. He approved of the faithfulness of that patriarch, in training his family to walk in his steps, that they might share his blessing, saying, "I know him, that he will command his children and household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment; that the Lord may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him." Gen. xviii. 19.

It cannot be affirmed that all the descendants of the godly were uniformly made partakers of renewing grace, in any age of the church, for "they who are

the children of the flesh, are not the children of God; but the children of the promise are counted for the seed." Yet, as the divine covenant with Abraham was intended to be everlasting, and as the disciples of Christ enjoyed the chief blessing of it in the promises of the new covenant, they have abundant reason now, as in former ages, to expect the spiritual renovation and salvation of a certain portion of their offspring. "Thus saith the Lord, I will pour my Spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thy offspring. This is my covenant with them, My Spirit that is upon thee, and my words which I have put in thy mouth, shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed, nor out of the mouth of thy seed's seed, from henceforth and for ever." Accordingly the apostles said, "The promise is unto you, and to your children. Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house. The unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband: else were your children unclean; but now are they holy. If the root be holy, so are the branches." Jesus Christ was much displeased with those who acted as if it had been in vain to bring children to him, and said, "Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God: and he took them up in his arms, put his hands upon them, and blessed them." Isa. xliv. 3.; lix. 21. Acts ii. 39.; xvi. 31. 1 Cor. vii. 14. Rom. xi. 16. Mark x. 13—16.

Encouraged by these declarations, and directed by the example of the primitive disciples of Jesus, believers ought still to bring their children to him in the way of his own appointment, that he may receive them under his care, and bless them. After presenting their offspring to the Lord, christians ought daily to offer up fervent prayers in their behalf, to impart early instruction adapted to their capacity, restrain them from the ways of evil, drive away their foolishness by seasonable correction,

command them to keep the way of the Lord, introduce them to the society of religious companions, and incite them to well-doing, by a holy example. Those who walk in these steps of Abraham, shew thereby that they are his spiritual children, and they may expect his blessing to rest on themselves and their offspring. Acts xvi. 15, 33. Prov. xxii. 6, 15. Eph. vi. 4.

9. *Worship your God daily, in spirit and in truth.* The figurative institutions of the old covenant were all fulfilled, and honourably abolished, by Jesus Christ; and the ordinances of the new covenant are all simple in their nature, and wisely calculated to raise up the heart unto God. It is vain and criminal therefore to worship him by any of the inventions of human wisdom. His word ought to be honoured as the only rule of his immediate service. As he searches the heart, and demands the spiritual homage of his people, they are required to watch over the frame of their minds when they approach him, to avoid formality and hypocrisy, and hold fast his grace, so as to serve him acceptably, with reverence and godly fear.

Be persuaded, therefore, to embrace every possible opportunity for reading his word, and such other books as are calculated to bring it home with effect to your mind. Meditate on it daily, and apply it as your spiritual nourishment. Abound in all the duties of the closet. Frequently try your heart and ways by the law of Christ, confess your faults, and renew your pious resolutions. Pray always, with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watch in the same with thanksgiving. Honour the Lord in your family, by reading his sacred word, and speaking of its contents, when you rise up and when you lie down.

Daily unite with your household in offering the morning and the evening sacrifice of prayer and praise. Frequently associate with other believers, for the purpose of mutual edification and private devotion; for Christ has promised to grant his spe-

cial presence to two or three when they meet in his name. Make the best use of the Lord's day, by joining the assembly of his church, and continuing steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and the breaking of bread, and prayer. Do not rest in the outward form of these duties, but make it your chief care to give God your heart in them. Fix your mind on his infinite perfections and surrounding presence. Ever remember that his eyes are upon you; he observes all your thoughts, and requires your ardent affections. Present all your services in the name of Christ, with confidence in his continual mediation, and in the acceptance of the Father through him. Stir up all that is within you to magnify the Lord, and seek the quickening influence of his Spirit, to animate your devotion. Keep alive the sacred fire within you at all times, that you may be constantly prepared for the stated return of religious duties. Ponder the solemn manner in which the praises of the blessed are presented before the celestial throne; remember that you serve the same infinite JEHOVAH; imitate their ardent zeal, anticipate their joys, and thus prepare for joining their assembly.

10. *Live to the glory of your God.* His essential glory admits of no possible increase, but his people are called to shew it forth openly, that others may behold it, and join them in celebrating it. Hence it is said, "Ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's. Whether therefore ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven." 1 Cor. vi. 20.; x. 31. Matt. v. 16.

In compliance with these precepts, the children of God ought to make his declarative glory the *rule* of their conduct, by preferring those practices which are best calculated to promote it—the object of their *unceasing care*, amidst all the engagements and changes of life—the *ultimate end* of all their deli-

berations and pursuits—and their *daily delight*, even as Jesus Christ esteemed it his meat to do the will of his Father.

Shew forth the glory of your God, therefore, by zealously propagating his truth, for the instruction of the ignorant, and the conversion of the disobedient. Call the attention of the young to the study of the holy Scriptures. Embrace every favourable opportunity for awakening the thoughtless, convincing the self-righteous, exciting them to ask the way of salvation, answering their inquiries, directing their researches, and encouraging them to attend on the faithful preaching of the gospel. Actively co-operate with other christians in supporting Bible and Missionary Societies, establishing and teaching Sunday Schools, multiplying and superintending circulating libraries of evangelical books, distributing religious tracts, and advancing every other laudable plan for turning men from Satan to God. Abound in special prayer for the successful promulgation of the gospel among all nations, the general conversion of the scattered posterity of Abraham, and the accomplishment of the divine promises respecting the universal reign of Christ in the last days. Shew the sincerity of your zeal for the truth, by devoting a liberal portion of your temporal substance, according as the Lord has prospered you, for the support and general diffusion of it. If you withhold from God that *proportion of pecuniary aid* which his cause demands, your prayers in behalf of it, which cost you nothing, will be rejected with scorn, as utterly worthless and profane. "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever any man soweth, that shall he also reap."

Glorify God practically, by abounding in all the fruits of righteousness. Add to your faith all the sister graces and amiable tempers, which are calculated to adorn his doctrine. Keep your tongue continually from falsehood and deceit, tale-bearing and slander; and let your speech be with grace, seasoned with salt. Walk in wisdom toward them that are

without, redeeming the time. Be diligent in your business, upright in all your dealings, faithful in all your engagements, candid in your representations, patient toward offenders, compassionate toward the sorrowful, generous to the needy, and benevolent to all. "Love your neighbour as yourself. As you would that men should do unto you, do you also to them." Shew hospitality to strangers, relieve the distressed, clothe the naked, visit the sick: bear contradiction with meekness, put to silence the ignorance of foolish men with well-doing, love your enemies, and overcome evil with good.

Circumspectly fulfil all your relative duties, and thereby recommend the doctrine of your God and Saviour to those with whom you are most nearly connected, who have the best opportunity of observing your practice, and perceiving its correspondence with your holy principles. You cannot glorify God by the occasional performance of a few conspicuous duties of rare occurence, if you fail in discharging the daily and numberless obligations of your station. God regards men according to what they are habitually in the ordinary tenor of their course: therefore the person who appears a saint on great and public occasions, and indulges in idleness, selfishness, covetousness, falsehood, or brawling in private, is only a sinner in his estimation. Therefore, whether you be a husband or wife, parent or child, master or servant, make it your constant care to acquit yourself so as to fulfil the reasonable expectation of those with whom you are connected, and strive to excel in your particular place, as the special way in which God has called you to honour him. Remember that your station on earth, whatever it be, is of small importance; but it is of the last importance that you be dutiful in it; for "whatsoever good thing any man doth, the same shall he receive of the Lord, whether he be bond or free; and there is no respect of persons with him." Do not imagine that you would acquit yourself better, were your condition altered; for the man who is evil

in the place which God has allotted him, would not be good in another of his own choosing. God is glorified by his people, in proportion as their faith is productive of good works: see therefore that you be zealous in the performance of such works as he has promised to approve in the great day of retribution. Titus ii.

11. *Love all the people of God with peculiar affection, as your brethren and companions.* They are the proper objects of such love, in distinction from the world, because they are his children by regeneration and adoption, and consequently adorned with his holy image; they are the brethren, the living members, and visible representatives of Christ;—being the excellent of the earth, God delights in them, and his angels willingly minister to them; having been justified by the same atoning blood, they are made partakers of the same divine Spirit; and they have the prospect of being all gathered into one at last, as joint heirs of the heavenly kingdom. They are therefore bound to love one another, in preference to the rest of mankind, with peculiar esteem and attachment, complacency, and reciprocal sympathy. Their love ought to be sincere, without dissimulation; pure, resulting from evangelical principles; ardent, corresponding with that of Jesus Christ; constant and abiding, notwithstanding the trials to which it is exposed; and active, manifesting its strength by its salutary effects. They are called to shew their mutual affection, by associating as brethren, and cultivating the most friendly acquaintance, saluting and honouring, forbearing and pleasing, exhorting and edifying one another: uniting with one mind, and one mouth, in glorifying their heavenly Father, and striving together for the faith of the gospel; and by warning them that are unruly, admonishing the disorderly, restoring offenders, forgiving the penitent, supporting the weak, and comforting the sorrowful, as their circumstances require. Our Lord enjoined such brotherly love, as the honourable and distinguishing badge of his fol-

lowers, by the new commandment which he gave them, immediately before he laid down his life for their redemption. This love is highly commended in the apostolic writings, as more excellent than all miraculous gifts; as the effectual and perfect bond of union; the brightest feature of the divine image, and the abiding glory of the heavenly state. John xiii. 34, 35. 1 Cor. xiii. Col. iii. 9—14. 1 John iii. 10—19.; iv. 7—21.

That the proper objects of brotherly love may be more distinctly ascertained, believers are commanded to unite themselves into particular societies called churches; and as the members of the same church have the best opportunity for being intimately acquainted, they are required to cultivate and manifest fervent love one to another, that they may thereby be prepared for entering the general assembly of the redeemed in heaven. The book of Acts shews, that the apostles formed a church of Christ in every city where they gained any converts, and the epistles which they afterwards addressed to some of these churches, shew very clearly of what description of persons they were composed, what order they observed, and how the members were required to act toward each other.

If therefore you desire to understand the true nature of a gospel church, and to please God, by being a useful member therein, frequently read the apostolic epistles to the churches which they had collected; observe their account of the religious experience and gracious attainments of their members; consider the peculiar quality of the love, and the variety of duties which they demanded from them toward each other, in distinction from those who were without; drink in their spirit, and prove the excellence of their precepts, by reducing them to practice. If you keep in remembrance, while perusing the apostolic epistles, that they were not addressed to mankind at large in a general way, but to visible believers who had been called out of the world by divine grace, and united into particular

churches for the service of Christ: you will find it easy to understand their proper meaning, and derive greater benefit by the study of them, than if you perused some voluminous commentaries; you will rise above the common ignorant opinion, that they have no determinate sense, that contradictory sentiments may be equally founded on them, or that their precepts cannot be acted upon by the christians of modern times; and you will be excited to cleave to the children of God, for your mutual edification in love, according to the primitive practice.

12. *Be steadfast in the public profession and practice of godliness.* The Lord permits the steadfastness of professors to be tried, that their character may be made manifest. Some have been tried with open persecution, others by the private, but insnaring influence of their carnal connexions. False teachers, and factious schismatics, draw away the unstable; and the infirmities of the just, cause those who are weak to stumble. The poor are sometimes discouraged by their indigence, and the rich are too often entangled by the allurements of this world. All are exposed to the machinations of Satan, and the incessant influence of their own natural propensities. Early impressions gradually subside, and the charm of novelty ceases. The way to glory appears long and rugged; many who seemed zealous at the commencement of their christian course, afterwards become weary and faint in their minds; and some openly draw back unto perdition.

Those who betray the profession of Christ, and turn away from his service, thereby do more to dishonour him before the world, and provoke his Holy Spirit, and grieve the hearts of his people, and strengthen the hands of the wicked, and aggravate their final punishment, than if they had never made any pretensions to religion. Having sinned wilfully, their condition is hopeless, and they have nothing to look forward to, but the fiery indignation of the Lord, which shall devour his adversaries. Heb. x. 23—31.

Call to remembrance your early impressions and pious resolutions. If Christ, and your soul, and eternal retribution, ever deserved your serious regard, they do so still; for death and judgment are much nearer now, than when you were first awakened from a state of thoughtless security. Gird on the whole armour of God, look constantly to Jesus as your leader, trust in him for seasonable communications of grace, fight the good fight of faith, and lay hold on eternal life. Study and apply the whole epistle addressed to the Hebrew converts, which is peculiarly calculated for the warning of backsliders, and the encouragement of drooping believers.

13. *Submit with a filial spirit to the discipline of your heavenly Father.* All the people of God stand in need of his correction during their imperfect state, to bring their sins to remembrance, soften their hearts to receive the healing impression of the word, promote the complete mortification of their carnal lusts, wean their affections from earthly things, and render them willing to depart and be with Christ. He has accordingly promised to correct them seasonably, and in due measure, not for his own pleasure, but for their profit, to make them partakers of his holiness.

Put away, therefore, the vain expectation of general tranquillity during this life, look for a daily succession of troubles, and prepare for enduring them in a becoming manner, under the influence of the consolatory principles with which you are richly furnished in the Scriptures. Look beyond the obvious instruments of your afflictions, to their divine Author. View them all as proceeding from the hand of God, who has both authority and power to do whatsoever he pleases with his own; and from the wisdom, faithfulness, love, and care of your heavenly Father. Remember that his correction is a new covenant blessing, one of the honourable privileges of adoption, and the appointed means of your progressive sanctification. Your troubles may be great and protracted, but the most afflicted temporal lot

of the heirs of promise, is preferable to the most prosperous condition of the children of wrath, who have all their portion of good things during their life-time. Your God may seem to frown upon you, and the aspect of his providence may be gloomy and discouraging: but his love changes not; he pities his children even while he smites them, nor will he suffer his promises to fail. He has undertaken to make all things work together for your good, and overrule your momentary sufferings, for the advancement of your everlasting felicity.

Take heed of despising the chastening of the Lord, hardening your heart under it, turning to the creature for comfort, or adopting any unhallowed means of relief. Beware also of fainting in the day of adversity, murmuring against God, charging him foolishly, or yielding to desponding thoughts. Duly acknowledge his divine and paternal right to chasten you, submit to him with filial reverence and resignation, and wait on him with patience and unshaken confidence. Contemplate the more severe afflictions of the people of God in former times, with the gracious manner in which they were exercised under them, and the happy issue of the whole. Resolutely imitate their example, till the days of your mourning come to an end, and in due time you shall be advanced to partake of their joy. Ps. lxxxix. 30—37. Jer. xxxi. 18—20. Heb. xii. 4—12. James v. 7—11.

14. Finally, *rejoice in your God, and in the hope of his glory.* Spiritual joy is equally the privilege and the duty of the people of God. A dejected disconsolate frame in any of his children, is highly dishonourable to him, and injurious to themselves. He has done much to render them happy, he has pleasure in seeing them happy, and his joy strengthens them for the performance of their duty.

Be thankful that he has established the closest connexion between true holiness and the highest felicity, and give diligence to have both united in your daily experience. Collect and contemplate the evan-

gelical grounds of joy, apply them to your heart by the prayer of faith; and stimulate your most pleasurable feelings, by frequently singing spiritual songs with inward melody to the Lord. Rejoice in all the attributes and perfections of your God,—in all the discoveries that he has made of his nature and will, —in what he has already done for you and bestowed on you,—in the person and mediation of his only Son,—in the abiding presence and influence of his Holy Spirit,—and in all that he has promised to do for you, and be to you through endless ages. Look beyond death, and cherish the hope of reigning with Christ in his kingdom, appearing with him in glory at his second coming, and dwelling for ever in his blissful presence. Put away the affected sorrow, the whining complaints, and the rueful grimace of the hypocrite. Shew unto others, by your deportment, that your God is not a barren wilderness, that his consolations are not an empty name, and that his service is not grievous. Honour his religion, by being more contented and cheerful than worldly men in a similar station of life; for he has said, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." Deliberately consider what your thoughts and feelings will be, when you obtain full possession of your heavenly inheritance, and meet your christian friends in the golden streets of the New Jerusalem, and accompany them in surveying the beauties, and partaking of the fruits of paradise. Frequently anticipate the felicity of being made perfect in body and soul, in conformity with your exalted Saviour; of being introduced by him into the general assembly of his redeemed, all in a state of similar perfection; and of being presented by him to his heavenly Father, to enjoy his fulness as your all in all. Dwell on the delightful prospect, realize it by faith, and honour God and the Lamb with joyful acclamations of praise, as you hope to do for ever before the celestial throne.

Having now gone over all that was proposed concerning the new covenant, I shall conclude with the following requests to them that are spiritual:

1*st*, *Candidly try all that has been advanced by the test of Scripture.* Do this deliberately and judiciously, without misrepresenting or hastily rejecting any thing. In fairly reviewing the whole, I hope you will see cause to admit, that no ground of just offence has been given,—that no part of Scripture has been wrested,—no gospel truth darkened,—no obligation to evangelical obedience weakened,—and that this view of the new covenant is calculated to manifest the glory of God, exalt the Redeemer, humble the self-confident, comfort genuine believers, and promote their establishment in faith and true holiness.

2*d*, *Carefully treasure up what you have received on this subject, and keep it in memory through your future life.* If you allow the truth to slip out of your mind, it will profit you nothing. The words of man are of inferior importance, and cannot all be retained; but, whatever you forget, make sure that you remember the words of the new covenant, with their comprehensive meaning. Let them be as familiar to you daily as the ten words of the old covenant were to the Israelites.

3*d*, *Make a practical use of the new covenant.* Do not neglect it as a matter of fruitless speculation, but apply the doctrine and the promises of it from day to day, to enliven your devotion, strengthen your faith in statedly receiving the outward token of it, confirm your love to Christ and his disciples, fortify your mind against temptations, comfort you under all your tribulations, animate you for the service of God, and prepare you for passing through the dark valley into the world of spirits.

4*th*, *Affectionately recommend the new covenant to those around you, who appear strangers to it.* You have not the temporal means of supplying all that are indigent, and relieving the distressed; but this covenant which you have discovered, is better than all earthly treasures. By persuading the poor to embrace its promises, you may enrich them without impoverishing yourself, or exposing them to envy:

by imparting its consolations, you may cause the wretched to forget their sorrows; and by inviting the guilty to take hold of it, you may save their souls from destruction, and establish an enduring relation which shall be recognised in the world to come, as the ground of everlasting attachment and joy.

Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is well pleasing in his sight, through Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

THE END.

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To consult at length - 38 - 52 -

Doubtful - 40 - 41 - 43 - 218

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